

PART II.

THE MEDIÆVAL HUMILIATION.



CHAPTER IX.

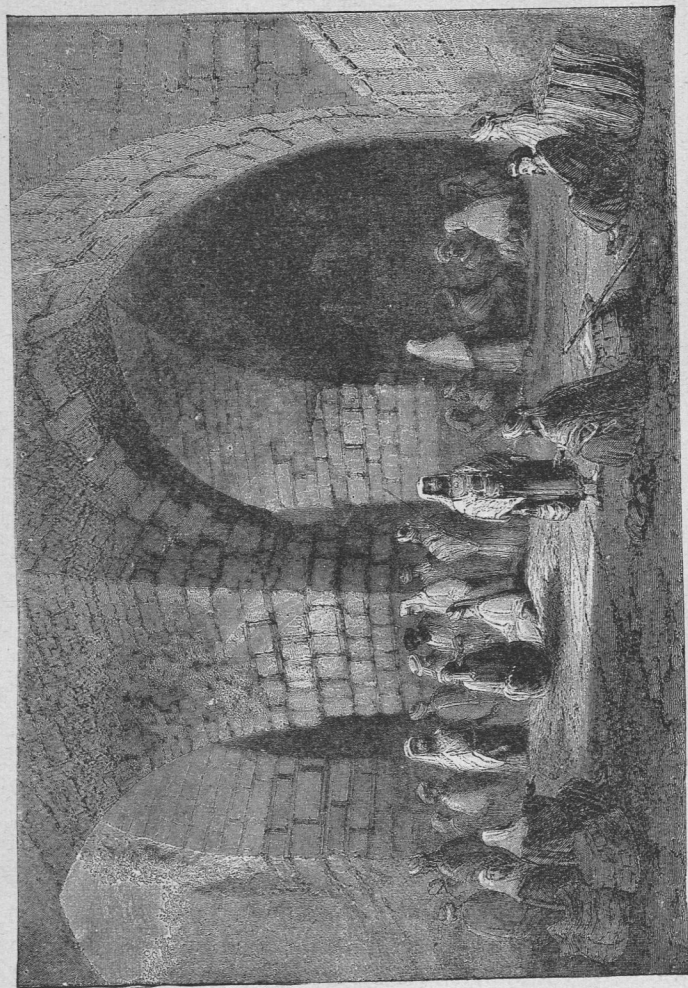
HOW THE RABBIS WROUGHT THE TALMUD.

THE year 70 of our era brought the dreadful tragedy of the destruction of Jerusalem. In the next generation the champion Bar Cocheba, whom many Jews believed to be the Messiah, headed a revolt which was soon put down by the Emperor Hadrian. The taking of his stronghold, Bethar, was the *coup de grace*; Palestine was utterly devastated; even the olive-trees had disappeared; the land was full of graves, the markets with slaves; the towns were given over to wolves and hyenas. Even the name of Jerusalem was lost; a pagan city, Aelia Capitolina, rose upon its site; a temple of Jupiter stood upon Mt. Zion, about which was gathered a population of Roman veterans, of Greeks, Phœnicians, and Syrians. So long as the Roman empire endured, no Jew could enter the city under pain of death.

Long before these events, the Jews, as we have seen, had begun to wander. The ten tribes that had disappeared in the Assyrian days were still to a large extent present in their descendants in Mesopotamia, or were scattered abroad in unknown regions. The prosperity of the great colony at Alexandria had

given evidence of the constant favor of the Ptolemies. At Rome the Jewish face had become well known, and they had penetrated with the legions into Spain and Gaul. "How unjust," said often the suffering Jew of the Middle Ages, "to persecute us because Christ was crucified, when our fathers had left Jerusalem long before his time!"—a plea often well founded.

The religious faith they gave to others they rejected themselves. Christianity became from its very origin the possession of the Gentiles, the Jewish following being always insignificant. These unbelievers, where have they not gone upon the face of the earth? It is said they are to be found in China and the depths of India, upon the steppes of Tartary, in inner Africa, in every market and capital of Europe and America. Alike among Christians, Moslems, and Heathen they have been outcasts and subjects of persecution, exposed to suffering not due entirely to the bigotry of the races among which they have been cast, but largely owing to their own exclusiveness and proud assertion of superiority. In entering upon an account of events in which the Christian world appears in a light so discreditable, it is only fair to state distinctly, that in the position which the Hebrews have constantly occupied toward the races among which they have sojourned, there has been much to exasperate men just rising out of barbarism—much indeed which those well-civilized have hardly been able to bear with equanimity. The Christian has bitterly persecuted; but when has the Jew been conciliatory? or, except in the



ROMAN MASONRY, JERUSALEM

case of the nobler spirits of his race, whom he has usually made haste to cast forth, when has he shown the wide-extending sympathy which recognizes cordially the brotherhood of the human race, and looks toward the tearing down of walls of separation between man and man? In this story of humiliation, therefore, the victim is not to be held quite blameless. Let no Christian, however, presume to claim that the guilt is not mainly with his household of faith.

The Jews, originally, had no special turn for trading.* In the earlier day their life we have seen to be that of herdsmen, tillers of the soil, and handicraftsmen of the simplest sort. Their traffic was insignificant even after their return from the exile, until the Macedonian days, when mercantile intercourse with other nations became among them a more frequent pursuit. Even then commerce was far from absorbing them. But in the countless lands into which they were at length carried by the dispersion, they were often forced to follow quite other paths than the old. The prejudice of the races among which they came frequently forbade to them the ownership of land and the following of the handicrafts. Commerce became to them the easiest, most natural resource; as they practised it, their dexterity increased. The success they reached aroused a disposition which their ancestors did not possess. The awakened trading-spirit favored the dispersion; the dispersion, on the other hand, stimulated the trading-

* Herzfeld: "*Handelsgeschichte der Juden des Alterthums*," 271, etc.

spirit, until, through the interaction, the Jews were everywhere scattered and everywhere merchants.

That the Jews have been in the latter ages pre-vaillingly traders, has been made a reproach to them, but for the reasonable of our day it needs no excuse. Honest trading is recognized as by no means worse than any other legitimate and necessary occupation. It may be claimed perhaps, that it has contributed more than any other to the elevation and comfort of man. During the breaking down of the Roman empire, the Jewish merchants were the connecting links between Asia and Europe. At the beginning of the Middle Ages they were an economical necessity. Forced into this channel by the fate which had overtaken them, confined to it more and more closely as fanaticism, growing more and more suspicious, shut before them the doors of other callings, they deserved not contempt but gratitude, as they helped the comfort, the prosperity, the civilization of so many peoples. As to the honesty with which they have trafficked, Israelite historians successfully show that they were honorably distinguished in antiquity. Not Phœnician or Babylonian, not Greek or Roman, equalled them. They were not Jews who made the same divinity stand at once as the god of thieves and of merchants. In later days also, in spite of the slanders of the learned and the unlearned, the impartial investigator will find the Jews in their business relations rather above than below the level of common morality, their faith in this as in every other department requiring of them an ideal purity.*

* Herzfeld.

After its wonderful seizure of the Aryan soul, Judaism encountered presently a form of faith more nearly related to itself than Greek, Roman, and Teuton ideas. It might be expected that from Mahometans, the Jew would receive somewhat better treatment than from races unallied. The Arabs, a stock which like the Israelites looked to Abraham as a progenitor, gave to Islam its prophet. In reality it is only at times, that the outcast people has received kindness at their hands, fiery Mussulman intolerance bringing more often to pass a persecution scarcely less bitter than that from Christian hands. Throughout Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Babylonia, however, the Hebrews spread, in the cities establishing thriving colonies, and maintaining at various points schools where a learning profound, though fantastic, was taught by the Rabbis to crowds of pupils. They followed with their congeners in the path of the advancing crescent through Northern Africa, and helped essentially in the conquest by means of which the old Visigothic power of Spain was displaced. The bloom of Moorish civilization followed; Averroes and Avicenna, with torches kindled upon Greek altars, lighting in the west the fire of philosophy. An art came to flourish which could create the Alhambra; a poetry was developed that softened and ennobled manners; many a truth of physical science was anticipated—a night, meantime, almost unbroken enveloping every part of Christendom. It was, on the whole, a happy time for the Jews. Given free course under the tolerant sway of the Caliphs, their striving was an

important factor in producing the beautiful result. When at length to the rest of Europe came the Renaissance, the Jews, going and coming in their intercourse with their brethren everywhere, now in the land where the arts were thriving, and now in regions where all was waiting, were among the chief mediators who bore the fructifying pollen from the sunny, blossoming spots to the more shadowed regions which awaited impregnation.

Among the Saracens in their time of power the lines of Israel did not fall ill, nor was its position one of difficulty when the modern world first began to emerge. Under Charlemagne, Jews were tolerated—indeed, befriended and honored. In the famous embassy to Haroun al Raschid, the honored figure is that of the Jew Isaac; and, in other positions than diplomatic, Hebrews were friends and helpers of the great path-breaker. Under the immediate successors of Charlemagne, still greater good fortune was enjoyed; but we cannot pass even the threshold of the Middle Ages without encountering a Hebrew persecution which is perhaps the most dreadful page of history.

Not a single Christian people has kept itself clear from the reproach of inhumanity to the Jews. To afflict them has been held to be a merit. The times when religion has been most rife and the conscience most sensitive have witnessed the sharpest scourgings and the most lurid holocausts. When the nations were aroused to redeem the Holy Sepulchre from dishonor, when the cathedrals were rising, gushes of devotion from the popular heart, fixed in

stone to stand for centuries, it was precisely then that the faggots were heaped highest and the sword was most merciless. The Jews and the Saracens were allied stocks, between whom a secret understanding may sometimes have existed. "If we are to fight infidels," said fanaticism, "why not fight them at home as well as in Syria?" Men and women chivalrous and saintly have denounced and wrung the Jew almost in proportion to their chivalry and sanctity, and this has endured almost to the present hour,—Richard Coeur-de-Lion, St. Louis of France, Ferdinand and Isabella, Luther, Savonarola, Maria Theresa,—yet how great is the debt of civilization to these men so cruelly hounded! They had become a trading race, indeed, but not entirely so. They had a large share in the restoration of learning and the cultivation of science in the time of the Renaissance. Through them many Greek writers were translated into Arabic, thence to be rendered into the tongues of Europe and made accessible to the young universities of the West. Through them medicine was revived, to become the parent of physical science in general. They were universal translators, publishers, and literary correspondents. Their schools at Montpellier in France, Salerno in Italy, and Seville in Spain, abounded in erudite men and scientific experimenters. While superstition reigned elsewhere, they were often comparatively free from it. The deserts of the Hebrews in these respects must never be forgotten, though perhaps here they accomplished less than as merchants, almost the only representatives of commerce as they were, "the fair, white-winged

peacemaker" flying across field and flood among the distant cities of men, binding them into a noble brotherhood.

We are to follow the footsteps of the broken nation into the lands of their exile, so utterly cold for them—footsteps of blood in a wintry landscape. But before taking up the story, something must be said about the standards which the Hebrews held in honor, now that their independence as a nation was destroyed,—standards venerated without abatement down to the present hour; a veneration almost universal, and a principal cause why the Jews, though so sundered and smitten, have maintained a solidarity.

First, the Jew held in honor the Scriptures, containing the Law of Moses, the sacred Torah, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, or sacred writings. The Canon, as we have seen, had been formed in the age of Ezra: the centuries which had followed had deepened respect for it; and as the Gentile world gradually became Christian, that, too, received the canon of Ezra, under the name of the Old Testament, with faith as undoubting as that of the Hebrews themselves.

But the reader will remember that when the written Law was brought from Sinai, a body of precepts was, it was believed, at the same time imparted, which was for many ages handed down orally. This was called the *Mischna*, and not until the time of the teacher Hillel, a generation or two before Christ, was any beginning made of reducing these traditions to writing. In the sad days which resulted in the

destruction of Jerusalem, no one was found to carry out the work of Hillel, but a time came when it was brought to fulfilment, and the result was the Talmud.

The latest Jewish authority* declares the composition of the Talmud to be the most important fact of Hebrew history during the four centuries that follow the fall of Jerusalem. In order to strengthen the written Law and supplement it where it was silent, recourse was had to those oral traditions which all Israel believed had come down from Moses himself. During the period mentioned the Jewish doctors made these the subject of ardent and minute study,—a labor believed to be necessary, since the destruction of the Temple and ever-increasing dispersion of the nation no longer allowed tradition to perpetuate itself as formerly. As this second code became developed, it was much more detailed than the Torah, embracing in its prescriptions the whole civil and religious life of the Jews, and ensuring unity of faith by the uniformity which it brought about in ceremonial practices.

The Rabbis, however, were not satisfied with the drawing up of the "Mischna." An attempt was further made to develop and reconcile, to render an account of whatever was mysterious; in fine, to apply to real or fictitious cases which the ancient doctors had not foreseen, the principles which they had stated only generally. This labor, pursued with diligence in the schools both of Palestine and Babylonia,

* Reinach : " Histoire des Israélites depuis leur Dispersion jusqu' à nos Jours," Paris, 1885.

resulted in the "Gemara," which was given to the world at last in two immense compends, the Talmuds of Jerusalem and Babylon, the latter and most important of which, even in the partial form which has survived to us, comprises twelve large volumes. To all but the most patient students, the work would seem to be a hopeless chaos. The subtle Rabbis took a lively pleasure in puzzling over insoluble difficulties, discussing to an infinite extent the opinions of their predecessors, discovering difficulties, sometimes imaginary, and trying to harmonize things quite irreconcilable. The contents are most varied,—satirical allegories, popular proverbs, fantastic imaginary stories, historical recitals strangely distorted, scientific discussions, medical prescriptions in which Chaldaic superstitions play a large part,—an irregular familiar talk, often, without rule or plan.

The authority whom I follow maintains that whereas to the Talmud in some ages has been assigned an importance quite exaggerated, it is at present by many critics quite improperly decried and depreciated.* The character of the men to whom the Talmud addressed itself is forgotten. At the time when the dispersion of Israel was beginning, it was necessary to raise about Judaism, at every price, a double and triple moral barrier, an exterior wall, to protect it against dissolving influences from outside. The Talmud was such a wall. It was long the principal, if not the sole, intellectual food of the scattered Hebrews. Its destinies have been those of the

* For an example of such criticism see Depping: "Die Juden im Mittelalter," 14, 15.

Jewish race, and whenever it has been burned, the burning of the Jews themselves has been not far off. If some minds have become stultified in its debates, minute and often inane, others have gained by their study a subtle and penetrative power. Many a rabbi, trained by the study of the Talmud, has developed and made fruitful other sciences. The philosophy of many a beneficent Jewish thinker had here its root. The first translators of Aristotle and Averroes passed their youth in the rabbinical schools. If the Jews escaped in a measure the eclipse of the Dark Ages, so total over the Christian world, they owe it to the Talmud.

A Gentile has great difficulty in obtaining any coherent idea of this strange old work. The Rabbis seem to prescribe and condemn tolerance, to approve and forbid usury, to recommend and despise agriculture, to honor and depreciate women. It seems strange it should have been held in such honor. One Rabbi said the written Law was water, the Mishna wine, and the Gemara an aromatic liquor very precious. I give a passage from still another Jewish scholar of our own time, who is believed to have been a most accomplished Talmudist *: "Well can we understand the distress of mind in a mediæval divine, or even in a modern savant, who, bent upon following some scientific debate in the Talmudical pages, feels, as it were, the ground suddenly give way. The loud voices grow thin, the doors and walls of the school-room vanish before his eyes, and in their place uprises Rome the great, and her

* Emanuel Deutsch : "Literary Remains," 45, etc., 151.

million-voiced life. Or the blooming vineyards around that other city of hills, Jerusalem the Golden herself, are seen, and white-clad virgins move dreamily among them. Snatches of their songs are heard, the rhythm of their choric dances rises and falls. Often, far too often for the interests of study and the glory of the human race, does the steady tramp of the Roman cohort, the shriek and clangor of the bloody field, interrupt these debates, and the arguing masters and their disciples don their arms, and with the cry, 'Jerusalem and liberty,' rush to the fray.

"It shows us the teeming streets of Jerusalem, tradesmen at work, women at home, children at play, priest and Levite, preacher on hillside, storyteller in the bazaar,—nor Jerusalem alone, but the whole antique world is embalmed there, Athens, Alexandria, Persia, Rome. * * * A strange, wild, wierd ocean, with its leviathans and its wrecks of golden argosies, and with its forlorn bells that send up their dreamy sounds ever and anon, while the fisherman bends upon his oar, and starts and listens, and perchance the tears may come into his eyes."

While it is so difficult to derive from the Talmud any system or history, the poetical scholar goes on to compare these fanciful pictures to photographic slides, half-broken and faded, but startlingly faithful. As the most childish of trifles found in an Assyrian mound may lead the scholar to great results, so may the trifles in the Talmud. That the old volumes contain shrewd worldly wit as well as profound spiritual wisdom, the following sentences will show: "Be thou the cursed, not he who curses. Be of them

that are persecuted, not of them that persecute. There is not a single bird more persecuted than the dove, yet God has chosen her to be offered upon his altar. He who offers humility unto God and man shall be rewarded as if he had offered all the sacrifices in the world. When the righteous dies it is the earth that loses. Thy friend has a friend, and thy friend's friend has a friend,—be discreet. Commit a sin twice and you will think it perfectly allowable."

Of the strange and beautiful romance of the Talmud, no better example can be taken than the story, to which Longfellow has given a form so charming, of Sandalphon.

Have you read in the Talmud old,
In the legends the Rabbins have told
Of the limitless realms of the air,—
Have you read it,—the marvellous story
Of Sandalphon, the Angel of Glory,
Sandalphon, the Angel of Prayer?

How, erect, at the outermost gates
Of the city celestial he waits,
With his feet on the ladder of light,
That, crowded with angels unnumbered,
By Jacob was seen, as he slumbered,
Alone in the desert of night?

The angels of wind and of fire
Chant only one hymn, and expire
With the song's irresistible stress;
Expire in their rapture and wonder,
As harp-strings are broken asunder
By music they throb to express.

But, serene in the rapturous throng,
Unmoved by the rush of the song,

With eyes unimpassioned and slow,
Among the dead angels, the deathless
Sandalphon stands listening breathless
To sounds that ascend from below ;—

From the spirits on earth that adore,
From the souls that entreat and implore
In the fervor and passion of prayer ;
From hearts that are broken with losses,
And weary with dragging the crosses
Too heavy for mortals to bear.

And he gathers the prayers as he stands,
And they change into flowers in his hands,
Into garlands of purple and red ;
And beneath the great arch of the portal,
Through the streets of the City Immortal,
Is wafted the fragrance they shed.

It is but a legend, I know,—
A fable, a phantom, a show
Of the ancient Rabbinical lore ;
Yet the old mediæval tradition,
The beautiful, strange superstition,
But haunts me and holds me the more.

When I look from my window at night,
And the welkin above is all white,
All throbbing and panting with stars,
Among them majestic is standing
Sandalphon, the angel, expanding
His pinions in nebulous bars.

And the legend, I feel, is a part
Of the hunger and thirst of the heart,
The frenzy and fire of the brain,
That grasps at the fruitage forbidden,
The golden pomegranates of Eden,
To quiet its fever and pain.

. As in antiquity the traditional Law was rejected by the Sadducees, who indeed found nothing worthy of respect but the five books of Moses, so in the modern era a sect known as the Karaites rejected the work of the Talmudists, and a bitter strife came to pass between these protestants of Judaism, and the Rabbanites, who accepted the work of the doctors. They mutually excommunicated one another, wrestled in the sharpest controversy, and refused to one another all friendship and alliance. Though Orthodoxy prevailed, Karaism is still not extinct, lingering on in a few communities in Lithuania and the Crimea.

Before dismissing the consideration of Torah and Talmud, a word must be said as to a very valuable and practical part of their precepts. The hygienic rules which they contain are said to possess great wisdom.* The idea of parasitical and infectious maladies, of which we now hear so much, occupied also the mind of Moses. He indicates with great wisdom the animals to be used as food, excluding those liable to parasites, as swine, rabbits, and hares. He prescribes the thorough bleeding of animals to be eaten, and the burning of the fat; it has been established that it is precisely the blood and the fat which are most liable to retain parasitic germs and carry infection. The Talmud, moreover, directs that the liver, lungs, and spleen shall be carefully scrutinized. Precisely those organs are especially liable to disease. With reference to dwellings and clothing, and the satisfying of natural wants, the rules of

* Dr. Noël Gueneau de Mussy: Hygienic Laws of Moses. *New York Medical Abstract*, March, 1885.

Torah and Talmud are excellent ; in point of health, the advantage of a careful observance of the Sabbath is very great ; even circumcision can be defended as an excellent sanitary expedient. In several respects the Mosaic Law is declared to have anticipated modern science by several thousand years. Throughout the entire history of Israel the wisdom of the ancient lawgivers in these respects has been remarkably shown : in times of pestilence, the Hebrews have suffered far less than others ; as regards longevity and general health, they have in every age been noteworthy ; at the present time in the life-insurance offices the life of a Jew is said to be worth much more than that of men of other stock ; Sir Moses Montefiore dies at one hundred, and in his great age as well as in so many other ways, he is only a type of his nation.

Clasping thus in his arms as his chief treasures the scrolls of the Torah and the Talmud, the incongruous mixture of divine wisdom with curious follies, of exalted poetry with grotesque and repulsive superstition, the Jew comes forward in his long pilgrimage through the centuries. From the time of those fierce figures whom we saw struggling to the last against Titus among the wild spear-brandishings and conflagrations in the midst of which Jerusalem went down, to the era of the revival of learning, there is no Hebrew character before whom we need to pause ; but here we come upon a memorable personage.

An illustrious type of the noble students and thinkers of the Renaissance was Maimonides, a native

of Cordova in Spain, who died in Cairo at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Even in youth he had mastered all the knowledge of his time, receiving inspiration especially from the great Averroes, the Moorish teacher to whom the revival of learning owed so much. Persecution from his brethren drove him from his birthplace, pursuing him elsewhere also, until at last he found himself at Cairo, where, winning the favor of the broad-minded Sultan Saladin, he became court physician, and stood in a place of high honor. At the same time he taught as Rabbi among his own people, spreading abroad through speeches in the synagogue, but more especially through abundant writings in Hebrew and Arabic, a multiform knowledge. He communicated instruction in medicine, mathematics, and astronomy; better than this, he sent far and wide a noble philosophy which anticipated in its freedom and reasonable spirit the thought of a far later day. Though he suffered harsh treatment at the hands of his fellow-Jews and the blind world in which his lot was cast, he found defenders and followers; his words communicated the hints from which the master-spirits of later ages have caught the inspiration which filled them; to-day men look back upon him, standing there, just where the dark ages are beginning to grow brighter, as a form lofty and venerable. Not that he was a man before his age. In some of his writings he dwells unduly upon Talmudic trifles and stupidities, and cherishes a true Hebrew scorn towards the notions of the Gentiles. But at other times he denounces astrology, draws up certain rules to be held

as fundamental principles, which proclaim monotheism and the immortality of the soul ; and in a book called the "Teacher of the Perplexed," tries to make easy for the common man the understanding of Scripture. In this work he so over-rides the confusion of the Talmud, that he was long held by orthodox Jews as a heretic, or possibly a secret Christian. He won, however, respect in life, and a pure and widely extended fame. His house in Cairo was besieged by the sick, who found in him a healer kind and skilful. Some declared him to be the first man truly great who had appeared among the Jews since the time of Moses, and it was written upon his grave that he was "the elect of the human race."





CHAPTER X.

THE HOLOCAUSTS IN SPAIN.

WE are now to examine the Hebrew story as it is told in the annals of one Christian race. The Jews have claimed that their progenitors were in the Iberian peninsula even in the days of Carthaginian rule. The Romans and Visigoths in turn succeed, and at length, through the Visigothic King Sisebut, the Hebrews undergo their first sharp persecution. They gladly exchange the Christian for the Moslem yoke, and, as we have seen, flourish with the Moors in brotherly accord. With the ebb of the Saracen power Navarre, Castile, Arragon, take shape on the strand that is laid bare, until in the fifteenth century the Cross supplants the green banner of the prophet even in Granada, and the forces of the whole peninsula, blended so that they can be wielded by a single arm, become the mighty power of Spain. The Jew changed masters, not to his advantage, but his misfortunes did not begin at once. The Spanish Israelites, the "Sephardim," as they call themselves, have always claimed that they were of nobler rank than elsewhere; at first they were prosperous and wealthy, with no mark of the degradation induced by being forced to debasing means of extorting riches. They

owned and tilled the soil, were the agents of commerce, cultivators of the arts. In particular, they were the physicians of the country. "Every one," says Milman, "sat under his shady fig-tree or cluster-laden vine singing hymns to the mighty God of Israel who again had mercy on his people." In the Crusades Spain took little part, embarrassment from infidels close at hand pressing much too sharply. The Jews, too, were spared for a time the outbursts of fanatical rage which overtook them elsewhere in Christendom, but the respite was brief. In 1212, a great battle having been lost against the Moors, as was said on account of the love of the king for a Jewess, twelve thousand Hebrews were massacred.

Christian cruelty, however, was at first fitful. The outburst of rage was speedily followed by favor, and for two centuries we trace alternations of cruelty and sufferance until the union of the crowns of Aragon and Castile. To avoid persecution many Jews became nominally Christian. The converts were almost universally still Jews at heart, though many ascended to positions of the highest eminence. Even in the Church the frock of the friar covered thousands whose confession was only a pretence. There were heads indeed surmounted with the mitre whose sincere homage was rendered not to the Host, but in secret, before the parchment tables of the Law. To discover how widely covert Jewish practices prevailed, it is said, it was only necessary to ascend a hill on their Sabbath, and look down on towns and villages below. Scarce half the chimneys would be seen to smoke, for the multitudes of secret Jews

celebrated their holy time. Among men of the bluest Castilian blood were those of Hebrew strain. The lordliest hidalgos bowing before the altar of the Virgin in public, often, when in private, lifted a tapestry, and by a secret door entered a shrine set forth with Israelitish symbols. Such a shrine is thus described by a descendant of the Spanish Hebrews, following, probably, traditions handed down from an ancient time.*

“ The edifice was square, and formed of solid blocks of cedar ; neither carving nor imagery of any kind adorned it, yet it had evidently been built with skill and care. There was neither tower nor bell. A door, so skilfully constructed as when closed to be invisible in the solid wall, opened noiselessly. The interior was as peculiar as its outward appearance. Its walls of polished cedar were unadorned. In the centre, facing the east, was a sort of raised table or desk, surrounded by a railing, and covered with a cloth of the richest and most elaborately worked brocade. Exactly opposite and occupying the centre of the eastern wall, was a sort of lofty chest or ark, the upper part of which, arched, and richly painted, with a blue ground, bore in two columns strange hieroglyphics in gold ; beneath this were portals of polished cedar, panelled and marked out with gold, but bearing no device ; their hinges set in gilded pillars, which supported the arch above. Before these portals were generally drawn curtains of material rich and glittering as that upon the reading-desk. But this day not only were the curtains drawn

* Grace Aguilar, in the “ Vale of Cedars.”

aside, but the portals themselves flung open, as the bridal party neared the steps which led to it, and disclosed six or seven rolls of parchment, folded on silver pins, and filled with the same strange letters, each clothed in drapery of variously colored brocade or velvet, and surmounted by two sets of silver ornaments, in which the bell and pomegranate were, though small, distinctly discernible. A superb lamp of solid silver was suspended from the roof, and one of smaller dimensions, but of equally valuable material, and always kept lighted, hung just before the ark."

It was very seldom that the zeal of the monkish preachers won a new convert.*

One is struck with wonder at the energy of the fanaticism that should undertake to crush out a form of unbelief so widely spread and so strongly placed. The attempt was made, and the instrument employed was the most dreadful engine which superstition ever devised—the Inquisition. In the city of Nuremberg one may go into the ancient torture-chamber—a room preserved unchanged, still retaining all

* From ancient times to the present day, indeed, the Hebrews have yielded few proselytes to Christianity—a fact amusingly hit off not long since by *Punch*, who describes the work of the English Society for the Conversion of the Jews in language substantially as follows: "It appears from the report of the Society for the Conversion of the Hebrews, that during the past year there has been an outlay of £5,000, as the result of which four large Israelites and one little one have been converted to Christianity. To effect the change, therefore, costs £1,000 per Jew. Mr. Punch would respectfully intimate to his Hebrew friends that he is acquainted with large numbers of Christians who would be very happy to become Jews at a much smaller figure."

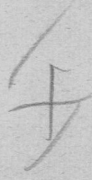
its dismal apparatus for causing suffering. No member of the body appears to be forgotten; for each is the appointed contrivance to wring and tear. Then by winding subterranean passages you are led to the vault in the bowels of the earth, where stands the "iron maiden," the apparatus for secret execution. At the touch of a spring the rude woman's figure flies apart, the blood-rusted spikes of its interior dreadfully visible in the light of the smoking torch, as in ancient days before the eyes of condemned men; and below, the yawning pit, from whose abyss sounds far down the splash of the sullen waters into which the mangled body fell. To speak of such things almost requires an apology. The man of modern times groans and shudders at these sights. "Whence came," he cries, "the people who made and used these engines? How can I believe that these beings are of the same nature with my own?" At Regensburg, at Salzburg, in Baden Baden, in those deep caverns hollowed out in the heart of the rock, where doors of stone close behind you with a heavy groan, and the loudest cry is muffled at once into a whisper, one may see the grisly apparatus of Nuremberg duplicated, and these cities are not alone. There are grim volumes on the history of torture, from which may be learned that through antiquity and mediæval times there was no lawful court which did not have, not far off, some such dismal appurtenance, the legitimate and recognized appliance, not only for the punishment of crime, but for the examination of witnesses. To my mind, there is no thing which so measures the length

of the forward step the world has taken, as the sickening dread with which the modern man contemplates these things which were once every-day and matter-of-course.

X In the Inquisition there was a wholesale employment of all this nightmare machinery. The Inquisition was established in the first instance to terrify into faithfulness apostate Jews, the sincerity of whose conversion to Christianity was suspected, and in almost all cases, with good reason. Seated in some vast and frowning castle, or in some sunless cavern of the earth, its ministers chosen from the most influential men of the nation, its familiars in every disguise, in every corner of the land, its proceedings utterly secret, its decrees overriding every law, it would be impossible to draw a picture which would exaggerate its accumulated horrors. Men and women disappeared by hundreds, suddenly and completely as a breath annihilates the flame of a lamp, some gone forever without whisper as to their fate; some to reappear in after years, halt through long tortures, pale and insane through frightful incarceration. When in the cities the frequent processions wound through the streets, with their long files of victims on the way to the place of burning, children bereaved of father and mother flocked to see whether among the doomed they might not catch a last look of the face of the long-lost parent. The forms that were observed were such a mockery of justice! In the midst of the torture came the cold interrogation of the inquisitor. Fainting with terror and anguish, the sufferer uttered he knew not what,

to be written down by waiting clerks and made the basis of procedure. Grace Aguilar, in one of her stories, makes her heroine to disappear through the floor of a chamber of Queen Isabella herself, who had sought to protect her, borne then by secret passages to a vast hall, where a grandee of Spain superintends cruelties of which my words give but an adumbration. She recites the traditions that have come down in Jewish families, and history confirms all that they report. No earthly power could save; no human fancy can paint the scene too dark.

For a time the situation of the Jews who dared to profess their faith openly, was preferable to that of those who made Christian pretences while really unchanged. It was not that the latter were regarded with greater favor, but because the powers hesitated before the magnitude of the task of dealing with a class numbering hundreds of thousands and comprehending a vast proportion of the intelligence and ability of the nation. But fanaticism rose to cope with the undertaking, showing a force and persistence that have something admirable even while so devilish. In 1492 a decree was passed, that the Jews, a multitude though they were, and often in high places, must depart from the land. Isabella, though well-meaning, was completely under priestly influence, and soon assented to the plan. Ferdinand, through motives of policy rather than humanity, hesitated long. When the decision was at length made, a dramatic scene is said to have taken place in the palace. Abarbanel, a Jew of the highest position and worth, a man compared to the prophet

 Daniel for his authority among his own race, and the respect he had forced from the oppressors of his people, penetrated to the presence of the sovereigns, and threw himself at their feet. He implored that his people might not be driven forth, and offered a bribe of 300,000 ducats that the decree might be recalled. Suddenly into the presence stalked, in his monkish robe, the gloomy form of the chief inquisitor, Torquemada, bearing a crucifix. "Judas Iscariot" cried he, unshrinkingly, to the abashed rulers, "sold his master for thirty pieces of silver; you wish to sell him for 300,000. Here he is; take him and sell him!" I do not know what sadder tale can be told than the relation of the scenes of their departure. The Hebrews had come to love Spain like their own Canaan. They visited the graves of their ancestors, bidding them a long farewell. Sometimes they removed the tombstones to carry them in their wanderings. Along the high-roads proceeded the long files of outcasts, sometimes to the beat of the drum which the rabbis and elders caused to be struck that the hearts of the people might not utterly sink, bearing with them the scrolls of their holy Law, and the remnant of their possessions. Valuable lands, in the forced sales, were exchanged for a little cloth; fine houses for a pair of mules. Vast sums that were owed them were confiscated; in every way they became the prey of the rapacious. Stuffing their saddles and furniture with such gold pieces as they could secure, they made their way to the harbors. Alone of the nations of the world, the Turks of the Levant were ready to receive them with 30,000

some kindness. Those who made their way to Morocco and Algiers were sold into slavery, starved, ripped open by oppressors, who hoped to find jewels or gold which the persecuted ones had swallowed. Christendom was barred against them almost as with walls of brass. Italy alone showed some trace of mercy. The great trading cities tolerated them, though for purely selfish reasons. The general policy of the popes, too, be it said to their credit, contrasts favorably with that of other sovereigns, though it was harsh enough, and such features of leniency as it possessed, came usually from no good motive. But even in Italy there was tragedy of the saddest.

In Portugal there was at first a prospect of mild treatment, and the greater part of the outcasts went thither. But a marriage of the king with a princess of Spain, which soon took place, brought to pass woes deeper, if possible, than elsewhere. Not only must the Jews depart, but their children were taken from them to be brought up as Christians, till at last mothers in despair threw their babes into the rivers and wells, and killed themselves. The stories of massacres are wellnigh incredible. But Spain pursued the policy without relenting. Those whom she cast out were of the best middle class, which both created the wealth of the land and kept it in constant movement, like blood within the body. They were not only capitalists, merchants, physicians, and scholars, but farmers, artisans, and laborers. The spirit of enterprise and culture left Spain with the Jews. Her population became spiritless and diminished, and the

land sank into a debasement which has never passed away.*

Following the details as given by the Israelite historian Graetz in his great work of eleven volumes, there are scores of vivid touches making all too plain this dreadful harrying and expatriation. "Spain," he says, "was full of the corruption of dungeons and the crackling pyres of innocent Jews. A lamentation went through the beautiful land which might pierce bone and marrow; but the sovereigns held back the arms of the pitiful." "The beautiful land!" so do the Hebrews call it, for they had come to love it, and looked back to it as to a paradise. "In our time," says Isaac Arama at the end of the 15th century, "the smoky column ascends to heaven in all the Spanish kingdoms and islands. A third of the new Christians (the nominally converted Jews) have perished by fire—a third wander as fugitives trying to hide, in continual fear of arrest. Beautiful Spain has become a flaming Tophet whose fiery tongue is all-devouring."

Two hundred years later the spirit of Spain was unchanged. I find in a Jewish writer an account of an *auto-da-fe* celebrated in 1680, in honor of the marriage of Charles II. with Marie Louise, niece of Louis XIV. Upon the great square in Madrid an amphitheatre was reared, with a box for the royal family upon one side, opposite to which was a dais

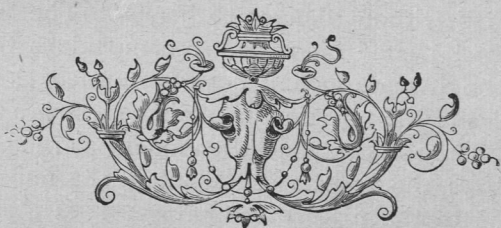
* This is the statement of Graetz: "Geschichte des Judenthums," volume VIII., the Spanish chapter. It can hardly be said, however, that Spain showed symptoms of decline until one hundred years later, at the time of the revolt of the Netherlands and rise of the Dutch Republic.

for the grand inquisitor and his train. The court officials were present in gala uniforms, the trade guilds in their state dresses, the orders of monks, an immense concourse of the populace. From the church towers pealed the bells, among whose sounds, were heard the chants of the monks. At 8 o'clock entered the procession. Before the grand inquisitor was borne the green cross of the Holy Office, while the bystanders shouted: "Long live the Catholic faith!" First marched a hundred charcoal burners, dressed in black and armed with pikes. It was their prescriptive right to lead the procession, as having furnished the fuel for the sacrifice. A troop of Dominican monks followed, then a duke of the bluest blood, hereditary standard-bearer of the Holy Office. After friars and nobles carrying banners and crosses came thirty-five effigies of life size, with names attached, borne by familiars of the Inquisition, representing condemned men who had died in prison or escaped. Other Dominicans appeared, a ghastly row carrying coffins containing the bones of those convicted of heresy after death; then fifty-four penitents with the dress and badge of victims, bearing lighted tapers. In turn came a company of Jews and Jewesses (in the interval since Ferdinand and Isabella a portion of the Jews had returned from banishment), mostly persons of humble rank, in whom the interest of the ceremony chiefly centred; these were to be burned as obstinate in their refusal of the faith. Each wore a cloak of coarse serge, yellow in color, covered with representations, in crimson, of flames, demons, serpents, and crosses. Upon their heads were high-

pointed caps, with placards in front bearing the name and offence of the wearer. Haggard they were through long endurance of dungeon damp and darkness, broken and torn from the torture chambers, glad, for the most part, that the end of their weary days had come.

As the procession moved past the station of the royal personages, a girl of seventeen, whose great beauty had not been destroyed, cried out aloud from among the condemned to the young queen: "Noble queen, cannot your royal presence save me from this? I sucked in my religion with my mother's milk; must I now die for it?" The queen's eyes filled with tears, and she turned away her face. She was unused to such sights. Even she, probably, could not have interceded without danger to herself. The supplicating girl passed on with her companions to her fate. High mass having been performed, the preliminaries to the terrible concluding scene are transacted. The sun descends, the Angelus is rung from the belfrys, the vespers are chanted, the multitude proceeds to the place of suffering. It is a square platform of stone in the outskirts of the city, at whose four corners stand mis-shapen statues of prophets. Those who repent at the last moment have the privilege of being strangled before burning. The effigies and bones of the dead are first given to the flames. Last perish the living victims, the king himself lighting the fagots; their constancy is so marked that they are believed to be sustained by the devil. Night deepens; the glare of the flames falls upon the cowl of the Capuchin, the cord of the

Franciscan—upon corselet and plume—everywhere upon faces fierce with fanaticism. In the background rises the gloomy city—all alight as if with the lurid fire of hell.





CHAPTER XI.

THE BLOODY HAND IN GERMANY.

IN one of the old towns on the Rhine,* I went to see a synagogue which, tradition says, was built before the Christian era. In Roman legions served certain Jews, who, stationed here on the frontier of Gaul, which had just been subdued, founded a temple of their faith. I felt that the low, blackened walls of time-defying masonry had at any rate an immense antiquity. The blocks of stone were beaten by the weather—the thresholds nearly worn through by the passing of feet; a deep hollow lay in a stone at the portal, where the multitude of generations had touched it with the finger in sacred observances. Within the low interior my Jewish guide told me a sorrowful legend, which was, no doubt, in part true, relating to a lamp burning with a double flame before the shrine. (Once, in the old cruel days, that hatred might be excited against the Jews of the city, a dead child was secretly thrown by the Christians into the cellar of one of that faith. Straightway an accusation was brought by the contrivers of the trick; the child was found, and the innocent Hebrews accused of the murder. The authorities of the city

* See the author's "Short History of German Literature."

threatened at once to throw the chief men of the congregation into a caldron of boiling oil if the murderers were not produced. Time pressed; the rabbi and elders were bound, and heard already, close at hand, the simmering of the preparing torture. There appeared two strangers, who gave themselves into the hands of the magistrates, voluntarily accusing themselves of the crime. Into the caldrons they were at once thrown, from which, as they died, ascended two milk-white doves. Innocent, with a pious lie upon their lips, they sacrificed themselves to save others. To commemorate their deed, the lamp with the double flame had been kept forever burning within the low arch.

I walked one day through the Juden-gasse at Frankfort. The modern world is ashamed of the cruelty and prejudice of the past, and would like to hide from sight the things that bear witness to it. The low, strong wall, however, was still standing, within whose narrow confine the Jews were crowded, never safe from violence or even death if they were found outside at times not permitted. Many of the ancient houses still remained, the fronts discolored, channelled, rising in mutilation and decay that were pathetic. The Hebrews of to-day seem to take pleasure in contrasting their present condition with their past misery. They have chosen to erect their stately synagogue among the old roofs,—upon the foundations even of the wall with which the past tried to fence them off from all Christian contact. Among such surroundings, how does the story, so long and so tragic, come home to us!

The persecution of the Jews in Germany, a chapter ages long, culminated * at the time of the Black Death, 1348-1350. This scourge, which carried off a quarter of the population of Europe, afflicted the Jews but lightly, on account of their isolation, and their simple and wholesome way of life. This comparative exemption from the pest was enough to make them suspected. The Jews poison the wells and the springs, it was said. The rabbis of Toledo were believed to have formed a plot to destroy all Christendom. The composition of the poison, the color of the packages in which it was transported, the emissaries who conveyed them, were all declared to have been discovered. Confirmations of these reports, extracted by torture from certain poor creatures, were forthcoming, and the people flew upon the Jews until entire communities were destroyed. The "Flagellants," fanatical sectaries, half naked and scourging themselves, swarmed through Germany, preaching extermination to all unbelievers. Basle expelled its Jews, Fribourg burned them, Spire drowned them. The entire community at Strassbourg, 2,000 souls, was dragged upon an immense scaffold, which was set on fire. At Worms, Frankfurt, and Mainz, the Israelites anticipated their fate, setting their homes on fire and throwing themselves into the flames.

A picture, derived from Jewish authorities,† shall make vivid for us the condition of the Israelites in mediæval Germany.

* Reinach: "*Histoire des Israélites.*"

† Based upon the incomplete novel of Heine, "*The Rabbi of Bacharach,*" and accounts contained in the history of Graetz.

The little community of Hebrews which already in the time of the Romans had settled in the town of Woistes, on the Rhine, was a body isolated, crowded out of all civil rights, and weak in numbers, notwithstanding that it had received in times of persecution many fugitives. The suffering had begun with the Crusades. Familiar accusations that were made at an early day, were that the Jews stole the consecrated Host to pierce it with knives, and also that they killed Christian children at their Passover, for the sake of using their blood in the service at night. The Jews, hated for their faith, and because they held the world to such an extent in their debt, were on that festival entirely in the hands of their enemies, who could easily bring about their destruction by some false accusation. Not infrequently through some contrivance a dead child was secretly introduced into a Jewish house, to be afterwards found and made a pretext for attack. Great miracles were sometimes reported and believed, as having happened over such a corpse, and there are cases in which the Pope canonized such supposed victims. St. Werner in this way reached his honors, to whom was dedicated the magnificent abbey at Oberwesel, now a picturesque ruin, whose carved and towering pillars and long-pointed windows are such a delight to the tourists who pass on pleasant summer days, and do not think of their origin.

The more outside hate oppressed them, however, so much the closer did the bond become, in these times, among the Jews themselves; so much the deeper did their piety take root. The Rabbi Abra-

ham at Woistes was an example of excellence, a man still young, but famed far and wide for his learning. His father had also been rabbi of the little synagogue, and had left to his son as his only bequest, a chest of rare books, and the command never to leave Woistes, unless his life were in danger. Rabbi Abraham had acquired wealth through marriage with his beautiful cousin Sarah, daughter of a rich jeweller. He practised conscientiously, however, the smallest usages of the faith; he fasted each Monday and Thursday, enjoyed meat and wine only on Sundays and holidays, explained by day to his pupils the divine Law, and studied by night the courses of the stars. The marriage was childless, but there was abundant life about him; for the great hall of his house by the synagogue stood open to the congregation, who went in and out without formality, offered hasty prayers, and took counsel in times of distress. Here the children played on the Sabbath morning while the weekly lesson was read in the synagogue; here the people collected at weddings and funerals, quarrelled and became reconciled; here the freezing found warmth and the hungry food. A crowd of kinsmen moved also about the rabbi who celebrated with him, as head of the family, the great festivals.

Such meetings of the kindred took place especially at the Passover time, when the Jews celebrate their escape from Egyptian bondage. As soon as it is night the mistress of the house lights the lamps, spreads the table-cloth, and lays upon it three flat unleavened loaves; then covering these with a napkin, she places on the little mound six little plates, in

which is contained symbolical food—namely, an egg, lettuce, a radish, a lamb's bone, and a brown mixture of oranges, cinnamon, and nuts. Then the master of the house, seating himself at the table with all his guests, reads aloud out of the Talmud a mixture of legends of the forefathers, miraculous stories out of Egypt, controversial questions, prayers, and festal songs. The symbolical dishes are tasted at set times during the reading, pieces of the unleavened bread are eaten, and cups of red wine are drunk. Pensively cheerful, seriously sportive is this evening festival, full also of mystery; and the traditional intonation with which the Talmud is read by the father of the house, and sometimes repeated after him by the hearers, in a chorus, sounds so strangely intimate, so like a mother's lullaby, and at the same time so stimulating, that even those Jews who have long since apostatized and sought friends and honors among strangers, are affected in their deepest hearts, if by chance the old Passover songs come to their ears.

Rabbi Abraham was once celebrating, in the great hall of his house, the Passover, with kindred, pupils, and guests. All was polished to an unusual brilliancy; on the table lay the covering of silk, variously embroidered, with fringes of gold hanging to the earth. The plates with the symbolical food gleamed brightly, as did also the tall wine-filled beakers, on which were embossed sacred scenes. The men sat in black mantles, black flat hats, and white ruffs. The women, in glistening attire of material brought from Lombardy, wore on head and

neck ornaments of pearl. The silver Sabbath lamp poured its festal light over the pleased and devout faces of old and young. On the purple velvet cushion of a seat raised above the rest, and leaning as the usage requires, Rabbi Abraham intoned the Talmud, and the contrasting voices of the chorus answered or joined in unison at the prescribed places. The rabbi wore also his black festival garment ; his noble, somewhat severely formed features were milder than usual. His beautiful wife sat upon a raised velvet seat at his side, wearing, as hostess, no ornament, while simple white linen alone wrapped her form and face. Her countenance was touchingly fair, of that beauty which Jewesses have often possessed ; for the consciousness of the deep misery, the bitter contempt, and appalling dangers in which they and their kindred are forced to live, spreads often over their features a trace of suffering and loving anxiety which strangely entrances the heart. She looked into her husband's eyes, with now and then a glance at the copy of the Talmud lying before her, a parchment volume bound in gold and velvet, an heirloom from the time of her grandfather, marked with ancient wine stains. The gay pictures which it contained, to look at which had been part of her amusement as a child, at the Passover time, presented various Biblical stories : Abraham with a hammer, dashed in pieces the stone idols of his fathers ; Moses struck dead the Egyptian ; Pharaoh sat magnificent upon his throne ; again, the plague of frogs left him no quiet, and finally he was drowned in the Red Sea ; the children of Israel stood open-mouthed in their

wonder before Sinai ; pious King David played the harp ; and finally Jerusalem with the towers and pinnacles of the Temple was illuminated by the sun.

The second cup was already poured out. The faces and voices of the guests were becoming always clearer, and the Rabbi, seizing one of the unleavened loaves, and holding it up with a cheerful greeting, read the following words : " Lo, this is the food of which our fathers in Egypt partook ! every one who is hungry let him come and eat ; let the afflicted share our Passover joy ; for the present we celebrate the festival here, but in the coming years in the land of Israel ; we celebrate now as bondmen, but hereafter as sons of freedom." Just here the door of the long hall opened, and two tall, pale figures entered, wrapt in broad cloaks, one of whom said : " Peace be with you. We are your companions in the faith, who now are journeying, and we wish to celebrate the Passover with you." The Rabbi answered quickly and kindly : " Peace be with you ; sit here by me." The strangers seated themselves at the table, and Abraham continued his reading. Often, while the by-standers were still occupied with the responses, he addressed sportively caressing words to his wife, then again took up his part, how " Rabbi Eleazar, Rabbi Asaria, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Tarphen, sat in Bona-brak and talked together the whole night of the Exodus, until their scholars came and called out to them that it was day, and in the synagogue great morning-prayer was already being read," or some similar passage from the quaint disjointed record.

As the Hebrew woman reverently listened with eyes fixed on her husband, she saw that his face suddenly became distorted with horror, the blood fled from his cheeks and lips, and his eyes stood out in dreadful astonishment. Instantly, however, he recovered himself. The agitation passed off like a momentary spasm, his features resuming their former quiet cheerfulness. Presently a mad humor, quite foreign to him, seemed to take possession of him. The wife was terrified, less on account of the signs of astonished fear than on account of the insane merriment. Abraham pushed his cap in wild sport from one ear to the other, plucked and curled the locks of his beard like a buffoon, sang the text of the Talmud like a street minstrel; and in counting up the Egyptian plagues, when the index-finger is dipped several times into the full beaker, and the drop hanging from it thrown to the ground, the Rabbi spattered the younger girls with red wine, and there was loud complaint over destroyed ruffles, and resounding laughter. This convulsive levity on the part of her husband seemed constantly stranger to Sarah, and she looked on with nameless anxiety, as the guests, incited by Abraham, danced back and forth, tasted the Passover bread, sipped the wine, and sang aloud.

At length came the time of the evening meal, and all prepared to wash themselves. The wife brought the great silver laver, adorned with figures of beaten gold, and held it before each guest, who poured water over his hands. While she was performing this service, her husband made a significant sign to

her, and during the preparations slipped unnoticed from the room. As she followed him immediately, he seized her hand with a hasty clutch, drew her quickly forth through the dark lanes of the town, and passed at length out of the gate to the high-road along the Rhine. It was one of those quiet nights of spring which, indeed, is mild and bright, but fills the soul with a strange thrill. The flowers exhaled an oppressive odor, the birds filled the air with a kind of anxious twitter, the moon threw white streaks of light uncannily over the dark, murmuring stream. The lofty cliffs of the bank seemed like heads of giants threateningly nodding; the watchman on the tower of a lonely castle opposite blew from his bugle a melancholy note, and now sounded forth the death-bell from the abbey of St. Werner, quickly pealing. The wife still carried in her right hand the silver basin, while Abraham kept fast his clutch upon her left wrist. She felt that his fingers were icy cold and that his arm trembled, but she followed in silence, foreboding she knew not what, while the sights and sounds of the night seemed to her, in her mood, pervaded with such strange terror. Reaching at length a rock which overhung the river-shore, the Rabbi mounted with his wife, looked warily in all directions, then stared upward at the stars. The moon illuminated his pale face in a ghastly way, showing a mingled expression of pain, fear, and devotion. As he suddenly snatched the laver from her hand and flung it down into the river she could no longer bear it, but throwing herself at his feet, begged him to reveal the mystery. The

lips of Abraham moved, but at first no sound came forth. At length he stammered: "Do you see the angel of death there hovering over Woistes? We, however, have escaped his sword, praised be the Lord!" With voice still trembling with horror he then related, his spirit growing calmer gradually as it found utterance, how, while in pleasant frame he sat chanting from the Talmud, he had happened to look under the table, and had beheld there at his feet the bloody corpse of a child. "Then I saw," he went on, "that the two tall strangers were not of the congregation of Israel, but of the assembly of the godless, who had taken council to accuse us of child-murder, and afterwards excite the people to plunder and slay us. I dared not let it be seen that I had discovered the work of darkness. I should have hastened our destruction by doing so, and only cunning and promptness have saved us. Be not anxious, Sarah. Our friends and kindred will be saved. The ruthless men coveted my death alone. Since I have escaped them, they will satisfy themselves with our silver and gold. Let us depart to another land, leaving misfortune behind us; and in order that misfortune may not pursue us, I have thrown away in atonement the last of our possessions, the basin of silver. The God of our fathers will not abandon us. Come down, thou art tired. Wilhelm, the dumb boy, waits with his boat there at the shore; he will carry us down the Rhine."

Speechless and as if with broken limbs, the beautiful Sarah had sunk away into the arms of Abraham, who bore her slowly down toward the shore. There

stood Wilhelm, who, the support of his old mother, the Rabbi's neighbor, followed the calling of a fisherman, and had here fastened his boat. He seemed to have already guessed the intention of the Rabbi, and to be waiting for him. About his closed lips played an expression of gentle pity, his great blue eyes, full of feeling, rested upon the fainting woman, whom he carried tenderly to the little boat. The look of the dumb boy aroused her from her stupefaction. She felt suddenly that all which her husband had told her was no mere dream, and streams of bitter tears poured down her cheeks, which were now as white as her robe. There she sat in the middle of the boat, a weeping form of marble,—by her side her husband and Wilhelm, who plied the oars vigorously.

Whether it is the monotonous stroke of the oars, or the rocking of the craft, or the fragrance of those mountainous shores, upon which grow the clusters that inspire man with joy, it always happens that the most afflicted man is strangely calmed, when on a spring night, in a light skiff, he sails upon the beautiful Rhine.¹ Old good-hearted father Rhine cannot bear, indeed, to have his children weep. He rocks them in his faithful arms, stilling their sobbing, relates to them his finest tales, promises them his richest treasures, perhaps the hoard of the Nibelungen, sunk so long ago. Sarah's tears flowed at last less passionately. The whispering waves charmed away her sorrows, the night lost its gloom, and the mountains about her home wished her, as it were, a tender farewell. As she mused, at length it seemed to her as if she, a child, were once more seated upon

the little stool before her father's velvet chair, who stroked her long hair, laughed at her pleasantly, and rocked back and forth in his ample Sabbath dressing-gown of blue silk. It must have been the Sabbath, for the flower-embroidered covering was laid on the table. All the utensils in the room shone brightly polished, the white-bearded servant of the congregation sat at her father's side and talked Hebrew. Abraham too came in, as in his boyhood, bearing a great book, and wished to expound a passage of Holy Writ in order that his uncle might be convinced that he had learned much the past week. The little fellow laid the book on the arm of the broad chair, and gave the story of Jacob and Rachel, how Jacob had lifted up his voice and wept aloud, when he first beheld his cousin Rachel, how he had spoken to her intimately at the well, how he had been obliged to serve for Rachel seven years, how quickly they had passed, and how he had married Rachel and had loved her forever. Sarah remembered that her father suddenly cried out in merry tones: "Wilt thou not marry just so?" Whereupon the little Abraham answered earnestly: "That will I, and she shall wait seven years."

As the figures passed vaguely through the fancy of the fugitive, they became strangely confused. The Rhine seemed at length to murmur the monotonous melodies of the Talmud, and the pictures she had known in her childhood appeared to rise large as life, and distorted. Old Abraham dashed in pieces the forms of the idols, which grew quickly together again; Mt. Sinai lightened and flamed;

King Pharaoh swam in the Red Sea, holding fast in his teeth his crown of gold with its points; frogs with human countenances swam behind, the waves foamed and roared, and a dark, gigantic hand was thrust threateningly forth. Coming to herself for a moment, Sarah looked up to the mountains of the shore, upon whose summits the lights of the castles flickered and at whose foot the moonlit mist was spread. Suddenly she seemed to see there her friends and kindred, hurrying along the Rhine full of terror, with corpse-like faces and white, waving shrouds. A blackness passed before her eyes, a stream of ice was poured into her soul, and vaguely into her half swoon came the voice of the Rabbi, saying his evening prayer slowly and anxiously, as by the bedside of people sick unto death. But suddenly the gloomy curtain was drawn away. Above the Hebrew woman appeared the holy city of Jerusalem with its towers and gates. The Temple shone in golden splendor; in its court she beheld her father, in his Sabbath attire, and with joyful countenance. From the windows her friends and kindred treated her joyfully; in the Holy of Holies knelt pious King David, with purple mantle and sparkling crown, sending forth afar the music of psalm and harp. Peacefully smiling at length, as if comforted by the vision, she slept.

When she opened her eyes again upon the world, she was almost blinded by the bright beams of the morning sun. The lofty towers of a great city rose close at hand, and Wilhelm, standing upright with his boat-hook, guided the boat through a thick press

of gay-pennoned craft. "This is Niegeschenburg," said Abraham. "There you see the great bridge, with its thirteen arches, and in the midst the little cabin, where, they say, dwells a certain baptized Jew. He acts for the Israelite congregation, and pays to whomsoever shall bring him a dead rat six farthings; for the Jews must deliver yearly to the city council five thousand rat-tails." Presently they landed, and the Rabbi conducted his wife through the great crowd on the bank, where now, because it was Easter, a crowd of wooden booths had been built.

What a various throng! For the most part they were trades-people, bargaining with one another aloud, or talking to themselves while they reckoned on their fingers; often heavy-laden porters ran behind them in a dog-trot to carry their purchases to their warehouses. Other faces gave evidence that only curiosity had attracted them. The stout city councillor could be recognized by his red cloak and golden neck-chain; the iron-spiked helmet, the yellow leather doublet, and the clinking spurs announced the man-at-arms. Under the black-velvet cap, which came together in a point on the forehead, a rosy girl's face was concealed, and the young fellows who followed her appeared like fops, with their plumed caps, their peaked shoes, and their silken parti-colored dress. In this the right side was green, and the left side red; or on one side streaked rainbow-like, the other checkered, so that the foolish fellows looked as if they were split in the middle. Drawn on by the crowd, the Rabbi, with his wife, reached

the great market-place of the town, surrounded by high-gabled houses, chief among them the great Rath-haus. In this building the emperors of Germany had been sometimes entertained, and knightly sports were often held before it. King Maximilian, who loved such things passionately, was then present in the city, and the day before, in his honor, a great tournament had taken place before the Rath-haus. About the lists which the carpenters were now taking away many idlers were standing, telling one another how yesterday the Duke of Brunswick and the Margrave of Brandenburg had charged against each other amid the sound of trumpets and drums; and how Sir Walter had thrust the Knight of the Bear so violently out of the saddle that the splinters of his lance flew into the air, the tall, fair King Max standing meanwhile among his courtiers on the balcony, and rubbing his hands with joy. The covering of golden material still lay upon the balcony and in the arched windows of the Rath-haus; the rest of the houses of the market-place were still in festal dress.

What a crowd of every station and age were assembled here! People laughed, rejoiced, played practical jokes. Sometimes the trumpet of the mountebank pealed sharply, who, in a red cloak, with his clown and ape, stood on a lofty scaffold, proclaimed aloud his own skill, and praised his miraculous tinctures and salves. Two fencing-masters, swinging their rapiers, with ribbons fluttering, met here as if by chance, and thrust at one another in apparent anger; after a long battle, each declared

the other invincible, and collected a few pennies. With drum and fife, the newly-constituted guilds of archers marched past. The sound was at last lost, and the long-drawn chanting of an approaching procession was heard. It was a solemn train of tonsured and bare-footed monks, carrying burning tapers, banners with images of the saints, or great silver crucifixes. At their head went acolytes in robes of red and white, with smoking censers; in the midst, under a beautiful canopy, priests were seen in white robes of costly lace, or in stoles of variegated silk, one of whom bore in his hand a golden vessel, shaped like the sun, which he held on high before the shrine of a saint in the market-place, while he half shouted and half sang Latin words. At the same time a little bell sounded, and all the people fell upon their knees and crossed themselves.

The Rabbi drew his wife away by a narrow lane, then through a labyrinth of contracted, crooked streets, to the Jewish quarter. This was provided with strong walls, with chains of iron before the gates, to bar them against the pressure of the rabble. Here the Jews lived, oppressed and anxious in the recollection of previous calamity. When the Flagellants, in passing through, had set the city on fire, and accused the Jews of doing it, many of the latter had been murdered by the frenzied populace, or found death in the flames of their own houses. Since then the Jews had often been threatened with similar destruction, and in the internal dissensions of the city, the Christian rabble had always stood ready to storm the Jewish quarter. The great

wall which enclosed it had two gates, which on Catholic holidays were closed from the outside, and on Jewish holidays from within.

The keys rattled, the gate opened with a jar, as the Rabbi and his wife stepped into the Judengasse, which was quite empty of people. "Don't be surprised," said the Jewish gatekeeper, "that the street is so quiet. An our people are now in the synagogue, and you come just at the right time to hear the story read of the sacrifice of Isaac." The pair wandered slowly through the long, empty street, and approached at length the synagogue. Even at a distance they heard the loud confusion of voices. In the court the Rabbi separated from his wife, and after he had washed his hands at the spring which flowed there, he stepped into the lower part of the synagogue, where the men pray. Sarah, on the other hand, ascended the staircase, and reached the place of the women above. This was a gallery, with three rows of wooden seats, dull red in color, whose rail was provided above with a hanging shelf, which could be propped up for the support of the prayer-book. Here women were sitting, talking, or standing erect as they earnestly prayed. Often they approached with curiosity the great lattice in the East, through whose green slats they could look down into the lower part of the synagogue. There, behind tall prayer desks, stood the men in their black cloaks, their pointed beards falling over their white collars, and their heads more or less veiled by a square cloth of white wool or silk, and now and then decorated with golden tassels.

The walls of the synagogue were whitened uniformly, and no other adornment could be seen than the gilded iron lattice about the square platform where the passages from the Law were read, and the sacred shrine. This was a chest handsomely wrought, apparently borne on marble columns with luxuriant capitals, whose flowers and foliage were beautifully entwined. On the velvet curtain which covered it a pious inscription was embroidered with gold, pearls, and many-colored stones. Here hung the silver memorial lamp, near a raised stage with a lattice, on whose rail were various sacred vessels, among others the seven-branched candlestick. Before this, his countenance toward the shrine, stood the precentor, whose chant was accompanied by the voice of his two assistants, a bass and a treble singer. The Jews have banished from their worship all instrumental music, thinking that the praise of God ascends more edifyingly out of the warm human breast than out of cold organ pipes. Sarah took a child-like pleasure, when now the precentor, an excellent tenor, raised his voice, and the ancient, solemn melodies which she knew so well rang out with a beauty such as she had never imagined. While the bass in contrast poured forth his deep, heavy tones, in the intervals the soprano trilled with delicate sweetness.

Sarah had never heard such music in the synagogue of Woistes. A pious pleasure, mingled with feminine curiosity, drew her to the lattice, where she could look down into the lower compartment. She had never as yet seen so large a number of

fellow believers as she beheld there below, and her heart was cheered in the midst of so many people so nearly allied to her through common descent, belief, and suffering. But the woman's soul was still more moved when three old men reverently approached the sacred shrine, pushed the curtain to one side, opened the chest, and carefully took out that book which God had written with his own sacred hand, and for whose preservation the Jews had suffered so much misery and hate, insult and death, a martyrdom of a thousand years.

This book, a great roll of parchment, was wrapped, like a prince's child, in a richly embroidered mantle of velvet, and wound about a pin set off with bells and pomegranates. The precentor took the book, and as if it were a real child, a child for whom great pangs had been endured, and whom on that account one loves all the more, he rocked it in his arms pressed it to his breast, and as if thrilled by such contact, raised his voice in joyful thanksgiving. It seemed to the woman as if the columns of the holy shrine must begin to bloom, and the wonderful flowers of the capitals grow constantly higher. At the same time, the tones of the more delicate voice became like those of a nightingale, while the vaulted ceiling of the synagogue threw back the powerful notes of the bass.

It was a beautiful psalm. The congregation repeated the concluding verse in chorus. To the elevated platform in the midst of the synagogue strode slowly the precentor, with the sacred book, while men and boys hastily pressed forward to kiss,

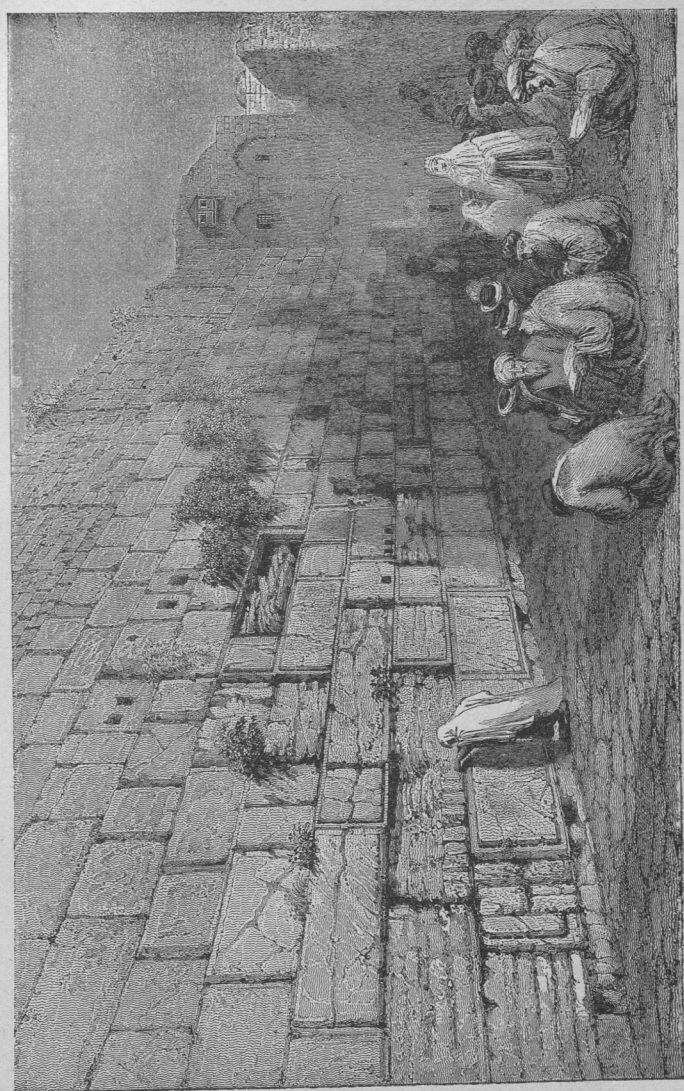
or, indeed, only to touch the velvet covering. The wrapping at last was drawn off from the sacred book; also the swathings in which it was enveloped, written over with variegated letters, and out of the opened parchment roll, in that intonation, which at the Passover is strangely modulated, was read the edifying tale of the temptation of Abraham. At last a prayer of especial solemnity was intoned, which no one is permitted to neglect. It was performed while the congregation stood with faces turned toward the East, where lies Jerusalem.

It is customary in the synagogue for any one who has escaped great danger to step publicly forward after the reading of the Law, and thank God for his salvation. When now Rabbi Abraham arose in the synagogue for such a thanksgiving, and Sarah recognized the voice of her husband, she noticed that his tone gradually dropped into the solemn murmur of the prayer for the dead. She heard the names of her familiar friends, and the conviction took possession of her that their kindred and loved ones at Woistes had not, after all, escaped the sword. She felt that some dread tidings must have reached Abraham, and hope vanished from her soul.

But now from without the walls resounded a heavy tumult. While the congregation had been gathered in the synagogue, a friar proceeding through the streets, carrying in a monstrance the Host to a dying man, had come upon a group of Jewish boys, throwing sand at one another in sport. Gravel-stones had hit the robes of the monk, and those that followed him had become so enraged that they pursued and

maltreated the boys. The parents of the children had interfered to free them from the excessive punishment, upon which the friar had run to the market-place, and cried with a loud voice that the Host, and his own office, as priest, had been desecrated by Jews. The rabble had attacked the Hebrew quarter, and the ominous sounds, at first not understood, that were heard within the synagogue, were the tumult of their frenzied onset. The Hebrews were overpowered wherever they could be seized—as they rushed from their houses, or made their way from the temple,—and given the alternative of death or baptism. The persecuted were, with few exceptions, steadfast, and destruction fell upon them. In their desperation they laid hands upon themselves. Fathers slew first their families, then took their own lives. The details are too dreadful to be dwelt upon. Rabbi Abraham and Sarah had escaped death the night before, only to find it now in a form not less terrible. The synagogue was burned, and the holy Law torn and trampled under foot. Thousands perished that day and the night following, only here and there a fugitive escaping.

As the tidings spread in Germany, the venerable Rabbi whose authority had become greatest among his people, counselled them as follows: “I have been told of the sufferings which have befallen our brethren—of the tyrannical laws, the compulsory baptisms, the exiles, and now at length of the massacres. There is woe within, and woe without. I hear an insolent people raise its raging voice over the faithful; I see it swing its hand against them. The



JEWS' PLACE OF WAILING, JERUSALEM.

priests and the monks rise against them and say: 'We will persecute them to extermination; the name of Israel shall no longer be named.' How the holy German brotherhood is handled! We are driven from place to place. We are smitten with the sharp sword, flung into flaming fire, into raging floods, or poisonous swamps. Brethren and friends! I cry to you that the land of the Turks is a land where nothing is wanting. If you consent to go thither, it may still be well with you. You can safely proceed thence to the promised land. \ Israel, why dost thou sleep! Up, and depart from this accursed soil!''\ The Hebrews obeyed in multitudes. They sought the far East, and found in the dominions of the Sultan a sway which, as contrasted with that of the sovereigns of Christendom, was merciful, even benignant.

What wonder that those who found their way back to Jerusalem established among the fragments of the ancient glory of their fathers, a wailing-place!





CHAPTER XII.

THE FROWN AND THE CURSE IN ENGLAND, ITALY, AND FRANCE.

THE reader will have had a surfeit of tragedy in the details that have been given of Hebrew tribulations in Spain and Germany, but whoso tells the story faithfully must give yet more. The treatment accorded the Jews by Englishmen was no kinder, though the persecution was less colossal, from the fact that the number of victims was smaller. The Israelites probably came to Britain in the Roman day, antedating, therefore, in their occupation, the Saxon conquerors, by two or three centuries, and the Normans by perhaps a thousand years. With the beginnings of English history their presence can be traced, the inevitable proscription appearing as far back as the time of the Heptarchy. Saxon strove with Briton, and Dane with Saxon, and all alike were at enmity with the Jew. Canute banished them to the Continent, where they took refuge in Normandy, and were well received. With the conquering William they returned to England, and for a time were protected by a kindly policy. William Rufus, in particular, showed them indulgence. He appointed a public debate in London between

rabbis and bishops, and swore by the face of St. Luke that if the churchmen were defeated, he would turn Jew himself. This favor, however, was transient; the Hebrews soon found themselves again under the harrow, their suffering culminating at the accession of Richard Cœur de Lion, in 1189.

The imprudent Israelites, over-anxious to win the favor of the new reign, thronged to the coronation in rich attire, and bearing costly gifts. The crusading spirit was rife; the presence of such infidel sorcerers at the ceremony was held to be of evil omen. An attempt was made to exclude them from Westminster Abbey, which many evaded, and the boldness of the intruders cost the Jews dear throughout the entire kingdom. Not a Hebrew household in London escaped robbery and murder, and outrage proceeding through the land wreaked enormities in the provinces that exceeded those of the capital. The preaching friars, omnipresent, taught that the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre could well begin with a harrying of infidels at home; and at York, at last, occurred a tragedy which only in Israelite history can find a parallel.

The great body of the Jews sought refuge in the castle, whence they defied the fanatics. The people, fired by the exhortations of the monks, who promised salvation to such as should shed the blood of an unbeliever, and who themselves, cross in hand, in their cowls, led the attacks, soon made it plain that resistance was hopeless. As in the old days of the Maccabees, a priest was at the head of the Jews. The chief rabbi of York, a man of great learning and

virtue, thus addressed them: "Men of Israel, this day the God of our fathers commands us to die for his Law—the Law which the people have cherished from the first hour it was given, which we have preserved through our captivity in all nations, and for which can we do less than die? Death is before our eyes; let us escape the tortures of the Christians, who prowl about us like wolves athirst for our blood, by surrendering, as our fathers have done before us, our lives with our own hands to our Creator. God seems to call for us; let us not be unworthy!"

The old man wept as he spoke, but the people said he had uttered words of wisdom. As the council closed, night descended, and while the besiegers watched upon their arms, lo, within the stronghold flared the blaze of a furious conflagration. In the morning an entrance was easily forced, for the walls were no longer defended. The fathers had slain with the sword their wives and children, then fallen by the hands of one another, the less distinguished yielding up their lives to the elders. These in turn had fallen by the hand of the chief rabbi. He at last stood alone; upon the congregation about him, man and maid, child and graybeard, had descended the everlasting silence. The flames that had been kindled devoured not only the possessions, but consumed the people like the sacrifice upon an altar. A final stroke and the old man lay with his fellows, leaving to the persecutors an ash-heap which entombed five hundred skeletons.

For a century longer a remnant of the Israelites maintained themselves in England; but Edward I.,

the "English Justinian," though in so many ways a great and good prince, drove them forth, 16,500 in number, and from that time for nearly four centuries, there is no evidence that British soil felt a Hebrew footprint. At length sat in the place of power a man mightier than Plantagenet or Tudor or Stuart, —Cromwell, the plain squire, lifted to the rulership by the uprisen people. With him pleaded for tolerance Menasseh ben Israel, a Hebrew of the synagogue of Amsterdam, wise and gentle, and the pleading was not in vain. The heart of the ruler was softened, the gates of the land swung open to admit the descendants of the banished. At first it was the barest sufferance, limited by every kind of disability ; but the chain has fallen from the limbs of the children of those men. Just as this record is completed, a son of Jacob is made a peer of the realm.

Near one of the arches of London Bridge, the "bridge of sighs," beneath which the sullen current pours so gloomily seaward, there is a spot in the river where at a certain stage of the tide the waters whirl in a strange, uncanny agitation. There, says tradition, in far off, terrible days, a company of Jews were thrown in and drowned. Men once believed, and it is said there are men who still believe, that the mysterious, uneasy bubbling and rush of the flood dates from the day when it coldly stifled the death-cries of those perishing victims. It is as if that stream of tragedy, which has helped and hidden so much of ghastly crime, had somewhere a conscience of its own, and, remorseful through the ages for having

been the accomplice in wickedness so terrible, betrayed its secret trouble even to the present hour.

In Italy, the hardships which the Jews were forced to suffer were somewhat less terrible than elsewhere. The land had no political unity: the great trading republics, Venice, Florence, Genoa, dominated the northern portion; the power of the Church held the centre; the influence of Spain made itself balefully felt in Sicily and at the south. There was no harmonious policy in the great peninsula, thus disintegrated. Each little state was, as regarded the Hebrews, sometimes oppressive, sometimes favorable; when in any city or district the skies grew dark for them, the Jews could often find more easily in the principalities than in the great kingdoms a convenient refuge. In the commercial states no prejudice, of course, was felt toward the Israelites from the fact that they were traders and money-lenders. What else were Venetian, Florentine, Lombard, and Cahorsin? They were the Jew's rivals, not his contemners, and there is good reason for thinking that these Christian usurers were harsher and more extortionate than the sons of Jacob, whose calling they had appropriated. The attitude of the mercantile cities toward the Hebrews was generally that of surly tolerance, that brought, however, no exemption from insult, or indeed, bodily ill-treatment, if caprice turned that way.

In Rome, the fate of the Jews hung upon the personal character of the Popes, who sometimes bravely

* Money-lenders who probably came from Piedmont. See Dep-ping, 175.

and humanely protected them ; sometimes threw over them a shield from the selfish advantage they might reap from their presence ; sometimes drove against them with fagot and sword as bitter persecutors. A little company of Hebrews had dwelt in Rome even from ante-Christian days, suffered to remain, it has been said,* as a monumental symbol, presenting the Old-Testament root of Christianity. Unmixed with Romans or barbarians, they had transmitted their blood. The community had seen the ancient Roman republic, after Brutus and Cassius had fallen at Philippi, tumble about them into dust ; the immeasurable marble city of the imperial time had held them in its circuit ; when the maces of the Goths had dashed this into ruins they lived on in the desolation. More indestructible than a column of brass, the little troop survived the fearful Nemesis of the ages. In the days of papal splendor they prayed—yes, in our own day they pray—to the God of Abraham and Moses in the same lanes, on the bank of the Tiber, in which their fathers dwelt in the times of Consul and Cæsar.

Whenever, in mediæval times, a pope was consecrated, the Hebrew congregation were among the attendants, standing with slavish gestures, full of fear or timid hope, while the chief rabbi at their head carried on his shoulder the mysterious veiled roll of the holy Law. They were accustomed to read their fate in the gloomy or genial countenance of the new pope. Was it to be toleration or oppression ? While

* Gûdemann : “ Die Juden in Italien während des Mittelalters,”

the rabbi handed the vicar of Christ the scroll for confirmation, their eyes scanned keenly the face that turned toward him. As the scroll was handed back, this was the formula which the pope was accustomed to utter: "We recognize the Law, but we condemn the view of Judaism; for the Law is fulfilled through Christ, whom the blind people of Judah still expect as the Messiah." Sometimes shielded, sometimes hounded, they drove their bargains, exercised many a profession,—in particular, as physicians, attended peasant and prince, monk and nun, even the popes themselves; but for them, as they went and came, the frown was never far from the Christian's brow, or the curse from his lip.

In Southern Italy the Jews had an especial note as artisans. They were the principal dyers, raisers and manufacturers of silk, blacksmiths, locksmiths, silver-smiths. Ferdinand the Catholic forbade them to carry on noisy labors upon Christian holidays. They were also builders and miners. When the mournful banishment of the Jews from the dominions of Spain came about, the story of which has been related, Sicily, as a country subject to Ferdinand, suffered with the rest. The foremost magistrates and officials of the island, however, interposed a protest, an eloquent testimony to the character of the exiles, a few words of which it will be well to quote:

"A difficulty arises from the circumstance that in this land almost all the handicraftsmen are Jews. If, then, all depart at once, there will be a want of workmen for the Christians—especially of workmen able to carry on the iron industry,—the shoeing of

horses, the manufacturing of farming-tools, the making of vehicles, of ships and galleys." The document continues in the same strain, illustrating convincingly, as a Jewish scholar urges, how the Hebrews have labored with eagerness wherever narrow-minded guilds and a spirit of envy did not forbid them to do so. If we may trust Sicilian testimony, relations of unusual friendliness existed between the island population and the Israelites thus suddenly banished. "It was an entire race which went into banishment. Another race with which it had lived for centuries, stood dumb, astonished, weeping, upon the city walls, the galleries, and roofs of the neighboring buildings, to give and receive a last greeting. The Jews abandoned Sicily—the land which had beheld so many successive generations of their forefathers, holding their ashes in its bosom. The despot who thus punished and drove forth the innocent, could not measure the infinite bitterness of such a separation. The catastrophe of 1492 remains indelibly inscribed among the saddest memories which the rule of Spain has left in this island." *

It is worth while to dwell for a moment upon the spectacle of this compassionate Christian multitude, gathered there upon the shore of the summer sea, weeping as they watched in the distance the departing sails of the exiled Hebrews. Rarely indeed did the dark world of those times afford such a scene. In a night of tempest the clouds will sometimes divide for a moment and suffer to fall a gentle beam

* La Lumia: "The Sicilian Hebrews," quoted by Güdemann, p. 291.

of moonlight. For the Jews it was everywhere storm and thick darkness—and how seldom came any parting of those wrath-charged shadows!

For some time after the Jews of England and Germany had found themselves oppressed, the situation of their brethren in France, was an enviable one. They were spread abroad even among the villages—on the farms, and in the vineyards, as well as in the towns, devoting themselves to agriculture, to medicine, to the mechanic arts, to study; traders and money-changers, however, they were for the most part. The skies were usually favorable, a fitful hail of persecution beating upon them only now and then; not until the accession of Philip Augustus, in 1180, did prince and populace, the upper and the nether millstone, begin their pitiless grinding. For a time it was less the fanatical hatred of the people, than the avarice of the king and lords, that bore hard. The treasures of the Hebrews were wrung from them in all cruel ways; where torture was unavailing, massacre was brought to bear, and at last a plundered remnant were cast as off-scourings beyond the frontiers. The term of exile was short. The rejected crept once more to their homes, to find they were henceforth to be held as the serfs of the king—themselves and their havings utterly subject to his disposal. The blessed St. Louis,* whom history and legend have so exalted, could sell his Jews like a troop of cattle, while he did so tearing from them, as a work of blasphemy, the beloved book, which in

* Reinach: "*Histoire des Juifs*," p. 160.

the midst of sufferings was their supreme consolation, the safeguard of their morality, and the bond of their religious unity—the Talmud. St. Louis burned the books of the Jews; Philip the Fair burned the Jews themselves. In 1306, on the morrow of the fast commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem, all the Jews of France, men, women, and children, to the number of 100,000, stripped of every possession for the benefit of the royal treasury, were cast naked out of the land. As in the case of the proscription of Philip Augustus, this, too, did not endure. The kingdom languished for want of them, and in ten years such as survived were recalled. They were scarcely re-established when there was a new experience of steel and fire; the “Pastoureaux,” bands of fanatical shepherds and malefactors, swept them away by thousands. Soon the “Black Pest” was upon the land; the Israelites protected in a measure by observing the hygienic prescriptions of their law, felt the sickness somewhat less; that the pestilence spared them caused them to be suspected; the spear, the caldron, and the devouring flame were again at work until victims failed and exhaustion fell upon the persecutors. The cold extortions of heartless princes, enforced by dungeons and the rack—the anathemas of bishop and monk—the whirling cyclones of popular fury—how among them all could a single one be saved! From these times a tragic Hebrew lay has been handed down to us, which affords a glimpse into the souls of those who thus suffered. It describes the immolation upon the funeral pile of a rabbi and his family,—a chant char-

acteristically Jewish, pathetic, tenderly affectionate, but bitterly scornful to the last, and audacious in its imprecations. A few passages from this follow * :

“Israel is in mourning, bewailing its brave martyred saints. Thou, O God, dost behold our flowing tears. Without thy help we perish !

“O Sage, who day and night grew pale over the Bible, for the Bible you have died.

“When his noble wife saw the flames burst forth, ‘My love calls me,’ she cried. ‘As he died, I would die.’ His youngest child trembled and wept. ‘Courage!’ said the elder. ‘In this hour Paradise will open.’ And the rabbi’s daughter, the gentle maid ! ‘Abjure your creed,’ they cry. ‘A faithful knight stands here who dies for love of thee.’ ‘Death by fire rather than renounce my God ! it is God whom I desire for my spouse.’

“‘Choose,’ said the priest, ‘the cross or the torture’; but the rabbi said : ‘Priest, I owe my body to God, who now requires it,’ and tranquilly he mounts the pile.

“Together in the midst of the unchained flames, like cheerful friends at a festival, they raise high and clear the hymn of deliverance, and their feet would move in dances were they not bound in fetters.

“God of vengeance, chastise the impious !
Doth thy wrath sleep ?

What are the crimes which I am forced to expiate under the torch of these felons ?

Answer, O Lord, for long have we suffered ; answer, for we count the hours ! ”

* Reinach, 163.

We need look no further in that lurid mediæval world. The Hebrew story is everywhere the same substantially—a constant moan as it were, with variations indeed, but seldom a note in which we miss the quality of agony. In their best estate, the Jews were but chattels of the sovereign, who sometimes followed his interest in protecting them. The king kept his Jews as the farmer keeps his bees, creatures whose power for mischief is to be feared, but tolerated for their marvellous faculty of storing up something held to be of value. As the price of his protection, the prince helped himself from the Jew's hoard, sometimes leaving the Jew enough for a livelihood,—enough sometimes, indeed, to maintain a rich state. If they increased, however, the potentate did not scruple to sell them, as the farmer sells his superfluous swarms; and if fanaticism drove out in the royal mind the sense of greed, as in the case of Richard Cœur de Lion, St. Louis, and Isabella, the Jew had no defence against a world in arms before him. If sickness prevailed, it was because the Jews had poisoned the wells; if a Christian child were lost, it had been crucified at a Jewish ceremony; if a church sacristan was careless, it was the Jews who had stolen the Host from the altar, to stab it with knives at the time of the Passover. In many periods in almost all lands, whoever sinned or suffered, the Jew was accused, and the occasion straightway made use of for attacks in which hundreds or thousands might perish. The wild cry of the rabble, "Hep! hep!" said to be derived from the Latin formula, "*Hierosolyma est perditā*," might break out at any

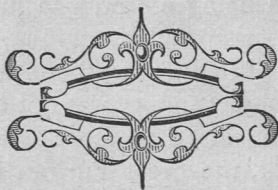
time. The Jew was made conspicuous, sometimes by a badge in the shape of a wheel, red, yellow, or parti-colored, fixed upon the breast. In some lands the mark was square and placed upon the shoulder or hat. At Avignon the sign was a pointed yellow cap; at Prague, a sleeve of the same color; in Italy and Germany, a horn-shaped head-dress, red or green. This distinguishing mark or dress the Jew was forced to wear, and when the "Hep, Hep!" was heard, he might well raise his hands in despair. He might indeed flee to the Turk; but the tender mercies of the Turk, tolerant as he was as compared with the Christian, were often very cruel.

As time advanced, the spirit of early Protestantism was often no milder toward them than that of the old faith, though it may have refrained from fagots and the rack. Men wise before their age have not been able to rise to the height of charity for the Jew.

Said Luther: "Know, dear Christian, and doubt it not, that next to the Devil himself, thou hast no more bitter, poisonous, violent enemy than a Jew, who is set upon being a Jew;"—a judgment of the great reformer perhaps not far wrong, for the Jew is, indeed, the best of haters. Luther's means, however, for opposing Hebrew enmity was not the law of kindness, but to set against it a more energetic enmity. In a similar spirit, the great Puritan body, which in Cromwell's day lifted England into glory, through their representative men, the ministers, set their faces steadily against all tolerance of the Jew; and it should be counted among the great Protector's

chief titles to a noble fame, that he bore down, with all the weight of his tremendous personality, the stubborn prejudice of his friends and upholders, insisted that the decree of Edward I. should be abrogated, and that the Israelite should once more have a place in England.

Men standing quite aloof from Christianity, even in times close to our own, have had regard scarcely kinder. To Gibbon they stand as an obstinate and sullen company who merit only his much-celebrated sneer. Voltaire could speak of them as "an ignorant and barbarous people, who for a long time have joined the foulest creed to the most frightful superstition, and most unconquerable hate against all who endure and enrich them." Even Buckle can say nothing kinder than to call them "that ignorant and obstinate race."





CHAPTER XIII.

SHYLOCK—THE WANDERING JEW.

ONE cannot study this many-volumed record of bloody outrage without feeling almost a sense of satisfaction, when sometimes the writhing victim turns and strikes a dagger into the persecutor who crushes him so cruelly. The Jews have not been, since the dispersion, a martial, combative race, but their history shows in them abundant power to smite when they have chosen to do so. When the Visigothic king, Sisebut, opened for them the chapter of persecution in the Spanish peninsula, they revenged themselves by smoothing energetically the path of the invading Moors. On Palm-Sunday at Toledo, while the people went in procession to church outside the walls, the Jews secretly admitted the Saracens into the city, joined their host, and fell upon the Christians with the sword as they were returning home.

One reads almost with pleasure of the conduct of a Jew at Oxford, in 1272. The university was going in procession to visit the shrine of St. Frideswide, when an audacious figure started from the Jewish quarter, wrested the cross from the hands of the

bearer, and, to the horror of the pious, trampled it, with loud execrations, into the mire.

Among the portrayals of Shakespeare stands one figure,—a figure which perhaps has affected us with aversion, but which as we view him with minds thrilled by the story I have tried to make vivid, beholding him, as he towers from this mediæval landscape, whose features are torture-chambers, massacre, and the flame-encircled stake, is characterized not only by fierce barbaric grandeur, but almost by a certain sublime virtue,—the figure of Shylock.

Cast as our lot is in a humane age, as we go from all our softened circumstances to sit for an evening before the stage where the great magician reflects for us a scene from one of those dreadful times of blood and iron which we have left behind us, we have, perhaps, felt the flesh fairly creep as that arrogant hater, cringing so stealthily, darting so tiger-like, reaches with intense greed for the heart of the Christian. "What news upon the Rialto?" Ah, what news might he have heard, indeed! We are told only in part how bad match came upon bad match—the Goodwin sands breaking to pieces the argosies of Antonio,—his treacherous daughter squandering the stolen ducats, and bartering for monkeys' the relics of her dead mother. That was all bad enough; but there was other news, of which the poet has told us nothing, which must have come to those outcasts in the Italian trading-cities, clinging, as it were, precariously to the gunwale, with cruel clubs raised everywhere to beat off their hold, in the midst of the raging sea of persecution and

death which tossed all around them. Tubal could have told him more from Genoa than of the heartlessness of Jessica—for instance, of a fleet of his countrymen, driven from Spain, who arrived starving off the harbor; of their being allowed to land only upon the bleak mole—men, women, and tender children, beaten by the sea-wind, swept by the waves, so pale and emaciated that if they had not moved a little they would have passed for corpses; there they were allowed to lie with the dear land at hand, till hunger and drowning brought the bitter end. This half-crazed Jewess just arrived in a Lisbon caravel that has brought a cargo to the Rialto—what tale has she to tell? That she was cast out of the city; that seven children were torn from her to be carried to the Lost Islands—remote places to the West, on the verge of the world, believed to be alive with serpents and dragons; that when she flung herself at the feet of the king and begged that she might keep the youngest—the babe at her breast,—the king spurned her, and the babe's cries grew faint on her ear as ruffians carried it away. This young man whose eyes can scarcely meet the gaze of men, as if he were weighed down by some unutterable humiliation,—what story does Shylock hear from him? “Under pain of being burned at the stake, I was forced to go to the Dominicans of a distant city; to ask that the bones of my father, buried there, might be dug up and outraged, as having died an infidel; then bring back from them a certificate, that at the request of me, the son, the dead father had been insulted.”

To some group of fugitives we may imagine

Shylock exclaiming: "And you, poor wanderers of our household, so bruised and maimed, whence come ye with your rags, your broken bodies, your hollow eyes?" "We are from the four quarters of Christendom, from the Elbe, the Seine, the Thames, the Danube; from the dungeons of nobles; from galleys where we were fettered to the oars until the chains ate through the bone, and from the edge of cauldrons of boiling oil. We poor remnant have escaped. Ask not how many perished!" In a sordid pursuit the soul of the Venetian usurer has become contaminated, but he is not without the nobler affections. He loves his dead wife Leah, his lost Jessica,—above all, his sacred nation, so cruelly ground,—with passion fervid as the Syrian sun which has given to his cheek its swarthy color. The simoom of the desert is not so fierce as the hatred in his strong heart, which he has been forced to smother. He has read well the law of Moses: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Amid the humiliations of a lifetime he, for a moment, by a strange chance, has a persecutor within his grasp. As he crouches for an instant before the attack to whet upon his shoe-sole that merciless blade, cannot one see in the flash of his dark eye a light that is not utterly devilish! It is the lightning of revenge—but then revenge may be a distorted justice.

Is there not something moving in this portraiture of Shylock by his fellow Jew, Heinrich Heine? * "When I saw the 'Merchant of Venice' given at Drury Lane, there stood behind me a beautiful, pale

* Shakespeare's "Mädchen und Frauen."

English lady, who at the end of the fourth act wept earnestly, and cried out several times: 'The poor man is wronged. The poor man is wronged.' It was a face of the noblest Grecian cast, and the eyes were large and black. I have never been able to forget them, those great black eyes which wept for Shylock! Truly, with the exception of Portia, Shylock is the most respectable personage in the whole play. The domestic affections appear in him most touchingly."

Far more than all historic personalities does one remember in Venice, Shakespeare's Shylock. If you go over the Rialto, your eye seeks him everywhere, and you think he must be concealed there behind some pillar or other, with his Jewish gaberdine, with his mistrustful, calculating face, and you think you hear even his grating voice: "Three thousands ducats, well!"—I, at least, wandering dreamer as I am, looked everywhere on the Rialto trying whether I could find Shylock. Seeing him nowhere, I determined to seek him in the synagogue. The Jews were just celebrating here their holy day of reconciliation, and stood, wrapped in their white robes, with uncanny bowings of their heads, appearing almost like an assembly of ghosts. But although I looked everywhere, I could not behold the countenance of Shylock. And yet it seemed to me as if he stood concealed there, behind one of those white robes, praying more fervently than the rest of his fellow believers, with tempestuous wildness even, at the throne of Jehovah. I saw him not! But toward evening, when, according to the belief of the Jews, the gates

of heaven are shut, and no prayer finds admission, I heard a voice in which the tears were trickling as they were never wept with eyes. It was a sobbing which might move a stone to pity; they were tones of pain such as could come only from a breast that held shut up within itself all the martyrdom which a tortured race has endured for eighteen hundred years. It was the panting of a soul which sinks down, tired to death, before the gates of heaven. And this voice seemed well known to me. I felt as if I had heard it once, when it lamented in such despair, "Jessica, my child."

The terrible tale of the Jews' humiliation is completed as far as I dare unfold it, and the effect of it must be to leave the mind in a fit state to dwell upon the pathetic legend of "The Wandering Jew." Of all the old superstitions there is scarcely one so sad and picturesque as that of the human being who cannot die, but must suffer on through the centuries, until the day of judgment. The mediæval chroniclers, from the thirteenth century downwards, report with undoubting faith the appearances of the poor fury-scourged pilgrim, and there are men in the world to-day who think the story not impossible.

According to one version, Cartaphilus, gate-keeper of the house of Pilate, as Jesus descended from the judgment-hall, pushed the Saviour, bidding him go quicker; and Jesus looking back on him with a severe countenance said to him: "I am going and you shall wait till I return."

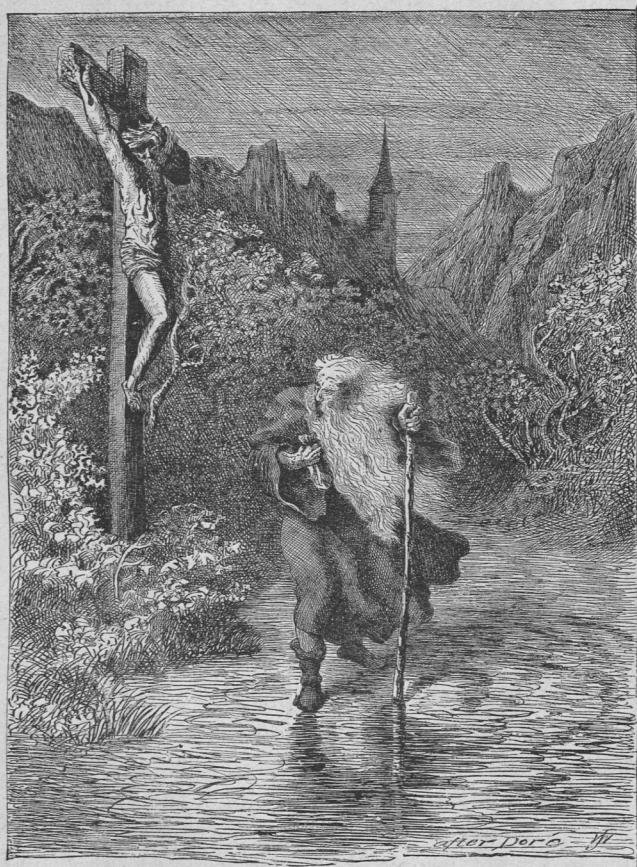
According to the more common tale, Ahasuerus, a

shoemaker, had done his best to compass the destruction of Jesus, believing him to be a misleader of the people. When Christ was condemned and about to be dragged past the house of Ahasuerus on his way to crucifixion, the shoemaker ran home and called together his household that they might have a look at the one about to suffer. He stood in his doorway when the troop ascended Calvary. As then Christ was led by, bowed under the weight of the heavy cross, he tried to rest a little and stood still a moment; but the shoemaker, in zeal and rage, and for the sake of obtaining credit among the other Jews, drove him forward and told him to hasten on his way. Jesus, obeying, looked at him and said: "I shall stand and rest, but thou shalt go till the last day." At these words the man left his house and went forward to behold the crucifixion. As soon as it had taken place, it came upon him that he could no more return to Jerusalem, nor see again his wife and child, but must go forth into foreign lands one after another, a mournful pilgrim.

So the broken, impenitent figure has been seen—sometimes in the throngs of cities, sometimes in deserts, sometimes in mountain solitudes, the tragedy of Calvary ever haunting him in rock, in forest, in the clouds of heaven, passing ever onward with no rest for the sole of his foot, every corner of the earth again and again visited. Whenever a hundred years have passed, his manhood is renewed for him, so that he stands again at thirty, the age at which he committed the sin whose expiation is so terrible. The accounts are so detailed and circumstantial, we

are forced to believe that many a half-crazed man has actually made himself and others believe that he was the Wandering Jew, and that many an impostor, seeking to affect men with the deepest awe, has assumed the character. How striking and picturesque are some of the developments of the conception; for instance, where it becomes combined with the myth of the god Odin, and appears as the Wild Huntsman!

One of the most philosophic students of modern times, Jacob Grimm, has taught the world that many a fairy tale and many a peasant superstition are nothing more or less than the remains of the great legends of the old heathen religious faiths, softened down, but still living in the souls of the people. Grimm and his school would have us believe that the phantoms of the mighty Norse gods still haunt the modern generations of the Teutonic stock, refusing to be exorcised from the popular mind. "Balder the beautiful is dead, is dead," sings the Swedish poet Tegner, after the old saga; and in like manner with Balder, we have believed that Odin and Thor and Freya were utterly gone, with the men that paid them worship. These students would have us believe that the ghosts of the gods, at any rate, refuse to be laid. Sometimes in blithe and merry guise they continue to appear in the souls of men belonging to the great races whose forefathers worshipped them; sometimes the grim circumstance that attended them in their former pre-eminence is not laid aside. What wonderful grandeur in the thought that these rough hands of the old gods



THE WANDERING JEW.

refuse to become decrepit through time, or beaten off by culture! How they reach round the new altars that have crowded out their own simple fanes, because the all-conquering Jew has willed it should be so! How they cross the widest oceans to the homes of the farthest wanderers, still haunting, phantom-like, the hearts of men whose barbarian sires held them dear!

The superstition of the Wild Huntsman, still cherished by many a simple peasant soul, can be thus traced back through the centuries to an origin in the stormy faith professed by the vikings. The fierce rider who presses unsatisfied, attended by his troop of deathless hounds, 'mid the roar of the winter's blast, through the heavens torn with the tempest, in pursuit of the stag that forever flies before him, was really the god Odin. As we think how the Wandering Jew has become connected with this stormy Northern myth, it might seem as if the old dispossessed chief of the Norse deities, wrathful at the usurpation that had reared the new temples in place of his own ancient fanes, had caught the Jew into the heavens in a spirit of weird revenge, compelling him to a companionship with himself in his desolate and fruitless quest.

In this elaboration of the legend of the Wandering Jew, Christ asked permission to drink at a horse trough in his agony, but was refused—the Jew pointing at the same time to the track of a horse's hoof, which was filled with water, as a place where his thirst might be slaked. At this point the heathen and Christian myth become confused. The Wandering

Jew, as the Wild Huntsman, must drive forever with his train through the fury of the tempest. The moaning of the wind at night through the forest—about the dwellings of men,—will cause the souls of the most unsuperstitious to thrill, as if it were filled in some way with the voices of spirits! Imagine the tumult in the breast of the peasant child of the Harz, or the Black Forest, or the rude districts in France, who, as the November blast at midnight wails and hurtles through the hills, believes it the dreary hunt of the everlasting Jew, and sees in the torn clouds, by the fitful moonlight, the tails of his phantom horses, the forms of his dogs, the streaming of his own white beard, careering forward in this eternal chase!

There is a tale current among the simple people of Switzerland which, to my mind, is as weird and thrilling as this. Whoever has climbed from Zermatt to the Gorner Grat, and stood with the snowy mass of Monte Rosa on the left, the Weisshorn on the right, and directly in front the bleakest and boldest of the Alpine peaks, the Matterhorn—its sublimity deepened and made dreadful by the story with which it is associated, of the men who have fallen from its precipices, four thousand feet to the ice below,—whoever has done this will well believe that there are few spots on earth more full of dreary grandeur. There is a bald, lonely mountain-spur confronting all the awful desolation, upon which the Wandering Jew was once seen standing, solitary, his haggard figure relieved against the heavens, before the abashed eyes of the dwellers in the vale who

looked up. He had been there before far back in the dim centuries; again in the fulness of time he will be seen standing there, his tattered garments and dishevelled beard given to the winds, his battered staff in hands shrivelled and wrinkled till they seem like talons, bent and furrowed by his thousand-fold accumulated woes. It will be on the judgment-day; on that bleak summit he is to receive release from his exceptional doom.

We shall best interpret the myth if we understand the Wandering Jew to be the Hebrew race typified—its deathless course, its transgression, its centuries of expiating agony, in this way made for us concrete and vivid.





CHAPTER XIV.

THE CASTING OUT OF A PROPHET.

THE writer who aims at a fair presentation of the sorrowful subject that has occupied us, must take pains to bring into a clear light the palliations which most certainly can be urged in mitigation of this horrible, widespread ruthlessness. The Christian world was just emerging from the barbarism of the dark ages: utter intolerance of all other creeds than that which it professed itself appeared to be a paramount duty. Without doubt, nothing could be more exasperating than the attitude of the Hebrews toward the surrounding Gentiles, whenever, for a moment the clutch was taken from his throat, and he was in a measure free to follow his own impulses. The heart of the Jew can be very unamiable; from the mountain of his scorn, the Gentile has seemed to him worthy of contempt more often than of any softer feeling. Toward the brethren of his own household indeed, the Jew has not seldom been unkind. Until the army of Titus could be descried from the pinnacles of the Temple, the factions in Jerusalem wrangled and slew one another. We are about to see how the synagogue excluded a most noble spirit with blasting anathemas. In all

ages, in fact, the grandest prophets of Israel have been too often cast out and stoned, for of no other race of men is the utterance of the disheartened Faust any truer:

“ The few by whom high truth was recognized,
Who foolishly their full hearts left unguarded,
Revealing to the crowd their noble vision,
Have always banished been, and crucified.”*

One's wrath at the mediæval Christian is somewhat lessened, on reading the story of the treatment accorded by his own brethren to the illustrious Spinoza.

But before we take up the tale of the great teacher whom his people persisted in rejecting, let us glance at a false prophet, whom in the same age they seemed very willing to accept. Their blindness is as plainly shown, perhaps, by exhibiting the leader they were ready to follow, as the leader whom they reviled and cast off. Throughout their history, the Jews have constantly maintained the ancient Messianic hope—a hope again and again disappointed. The twelfth, the thirteenth, and the sixteenth centuries produced impostors who claimed to be the Prince of the House of David, destined to restore the glory of Zion; such too in the more ancient time was Bar Cocheba, the champion of the reign of Hadrian. No false Messiah, however, has been so successful as Sabbatäi Zevi,† a

* “ Die wenigen die was davon erkannt,
Die thöricht g'nug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten,
Dem Pöbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Schauen offenbarten,
Hat man von je gekreuzigt und verbannt.”

† Reinach, p. 270, etc.

Jew of Smyrna, born in 1626. He was the son of a commercial agent employed by an English house ; his person was attractive, his manner austere and reticent ; by fasts, ablutions, and zealous attention to the rites in general, he early made himself marked. At the age of twenty-five he announced himself as Messiah, and followed by a troop of disciples which constantly grew larger, he travelled from city to city through Greece, Syria, and Egypt. A mad fanatic, Nathan of Gaza, went before him to announce his coming. At Cairo, meeting a young Polish Jewess of rare beauty, who had escaped by miracle from the massacres of the Cossacks, and afterwards from a Catholic cloister in which she had taken refuge, Sabbatäi married her, declaring that she had been destined for him from all eternity. Returning to Smyrna, he took openly, in full synagogue, the title of Messiah, exciting transports of enthusiasm. The feeble protestations of a few rabbis of good sense were smothered in the popular clamor. The renown of the new prophet spread everywhere ; he soon counted ardent adherents at Amsterdam, at Hamburg, even at London. Zealots in many places destroyed their dwellings, collected their wealth, and prepared to set out for the East, where at length Israel was to be restored to glory. In Persia, the Jewish laborers refused to cultivate longer the earth. A mad inspiration seemed to have seized upon the whole Hebrew race.

The audacity of Sabbatäi became stimulated by his success. He made daring changes in the Jewish ritual, abrogating and transferring fasts and feasts

ancient as the race itself; he divided the crowns of the earth among his brothers and friends, reserving for himself the title of King of Kings. At length he set out for Constantinople, where, he declared, his mission was to be accomplished. The Turkish Government, which left him unmolested while the excitement which he created was distant, now seized upon him, threw him into chains, and imprisoned him at the Castle of the Dardanelles.

The fidelity of the proselytes was not at all disturbed by this misfortune. The cunning Turks saw their chance. The captivity of Sabbatäi came at last to resemble a sumptuous hospitality. He lived in state in the castle, whither Jews hastened by thousands to contemplate his divine features, taxed heavily meantime by the Mussulmans, who managed shrewdly to reap advantages. A rabbi from Poland finally denounced him as an impostor and disturber of the peace. The Sultan, Mahomet IV., had Sabbatäi brought before him, caused him to be fastened naked to a post, and commanded archers to shoot at him. At the same time he promised to become a Jew, if the "Son of God," by a miracle which ought to be easy to him, should render his body invulnerable to the arrows. Sabbatäi immediately quailed. The alternative being offered him of becoming a Mussulman or being instantly driven forth, he adopted the turban without hesitation, adored the prophet of Medina, and received the name of Mahomet Effendi.

The stupor of his followers may be imagined, The rabbis, undeceived at last, hurried to excommunicate his partisans. Faithful adherents even now

remained to him in Africa, Italy, Germany, and Poland. Some declared he had not turned Turk, that his shadow only remained upon the earth, while his body had ascended to heaven. Others maintained that his passage through Islamism, as well as his preceding trials and experiences, were part of his mission. This view Sabbatāi encouraged, conforming externally to Mussulman rites, but secretly returning to the synagogue and posing anew as a fervent Israelite. The hypocrite was unmasked: the Sultan contemptuously gave him his life, and he died at last in obscurity.

At the very hour when infatuated Israel had abused herself most deeply, pouring out her veneration at the feet of the wretched charlatan of Smyrna, she cast forth from herself one of the most illustrious of her sons, a spirit capable of the highest leadership, wise, and of the purest beauty.

It was Holland, just set free by the heroism of its people from the bigot grip of Spain, which led the way among the countries of Europe in the new path of toleration. Hither flocked in the seventeenth century the oppressed and the outcasts of all nations,—the Puritan from England, sore from the persecution of the Stuarts,—the free-thinker and Huguenot from France, just escaped from the stake in the Catholic reaction,—the bolder and finer spirits of Italy, Germany, Poland, whom neither bribe nor brow-beating could reduce to conformity. Hither, too, came the foot-sore and down-hearted Jew, making at length shrines for the sacred rolls of the Law

which were not to be desecrated, and taking breath from the scourge in the noble cities whose atmosphere was sweet and bracing with liberty. The Israelitish aristocracy are the "Sephardim," the band that in Spain and Portugal contributed so much to the greatness of those countries in their golden period. Of this Hebrew aristocracy among the Spanish Jews, in Amsterdam, early in the seventeenth century, was born Baruch or Benedict Spinoza.

The name of Spinoza is one burdened long with undeserved reproach. He was falsely accused of atheism, whereas, as his vindicators justly claim, he should rather be called a God-intoxicated man. Lewes, a writer who has no sympathy with his philosophical system, but a great admiration for his vast intellectual power and noble character, gives in a picture full of brilliant lights the story of his career. He describes him as "a little Jewish boy playing with his sisters on the Burgwal of Amsterdam, close to the Portuguese synagogue. His face is mild and ingenuous; his eyes small, but bright, quick, and penetrative, his dark hair flowing in luxuriant curls over his neck and shoulders. Amsterdam is noisy with the creaking of cordage, the bawling of sailors, and the busy trafficking of traders. The Zuyder Zee is crowded with vessels laden with precious stores from all quarters of the globe. The canals which ramify that city, like a great arterial system, are blocked up with boats and barges, the whole scene vivid with the greatness and the littleness of commerce. The parents of Spinoza were from mercantile families, among the fugitives from Spain.



SPINOZA.

having their part in all this commercial bustle ; and the lively boy would, it was supposed, like his ancestors, play a part upon the market and exchange." His passion for study, however, and the brightness of his mind induced his parents to educate him as a rabbi. Upon the study of Talmud and Old Testament Spinoza entered with zeal, and at fourteen, even, is said to have rivalled almost all the doctors in the exactitude and extent of his knowledge.

Great hopes were entertained of the youth, hopes which gave way to fears when the rabbis discovered that the boy was developing a questioning spirit whose pertinacity they were unable to satisfy. He was summoned before the synagogue, and at length threatened with excommunication.* An offer of an annual pension of a thousand florins was made to him, if he would only consent to be silent and assist from time to time in the services of the synagogue, which, however, was refused with scorn.

In truth, the learning which the boy was set to master was excessively intricate and fantastic. Vast respect was paid at that time among the Hebrews to the "Cabala," about which a word must be said. The pious Jew of that day believed that, aside from its obvious signification, every tittle of Scripture had its symbolical meaning, and a strange collection of rhapsodies and wild imaginings had been growing up from the thirteenth century, which were generally received as an authentic interpretation of this secondary sense. From this source all Jewry was overrun with demonology, thaumaturgy, and other

* "Life of Spinoza," by Colerus.

strange fancies.* In Spinoza's generation this had its most extravagant development. It was, indeed, unmitigated nonsense, whose puerilities, if not disgusting, were ludicrous. The clear-brained youth, as he matured, rejected it all, withdrew from the synagogue, and made ready to win his bread by learning the trade of polishing lenses for optical instruments, a craft in which he became dexterous.

The discipline of the rabbis was severe. Shortly before, a Jew, who had incurred the displeasure of the elders, had been forced to lie across the threshold of the synagogue, presenting his body to the feet of the congregation as it passed out. In some such way they would have been glad to humiliate Spinoza. No penance could, however, be imposed upon him, for he had withdrawn himself. But fanaticism felt justified in trying another means. One evening as Spinoza was coming out of the theatre, he was startled by the fierce expression of a dark face, thrust eagerly before his. A knife gleamed in the air, and he had barely time to parry the blow. It fell upon his chest, but fortunately, deadened in its force, only tore his coat. Thus he escaped assassination, but he could still be excommunicated and cursed.

"The day of excommunication at length arrived, and a vast concourse assembled to witness the awful ceremony. It began by the solemn and silent lighting of a quantity of black wax-candles, and by opening the tabernacle wherein were deposited the books of the law of Moses. Thus were the dim

* Pollock: "Life of Spinoza,"

imaginations of the faithful prepared for all the horror of the scene. The chief-rabbi, the ancient friend and master, now the fiercest enemy, of the condemned, was to order the execution. He stood there pained, but implacable; the people fixed their eager eyes upon him. High above the chanter rose and chanted forth in loud, lugubrious tones the words of execration; while from the opposite side another mingled with these curses the thrilling sounds of the trumpet. And now the black candles were reversed, and were made to melt drop by drop into a huge tub filled with blood." *

Then came the final anathema. "With the judgment of the angels and of the saints, we excommunicate, cut off, curse, and anathematize Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of the elders and of all this holy congregation, in the presence of the holy books: by the 613 precepts which are written therein, with the anathema wherewith Joshua cursed Jericho, with the curse which Elisha laid upon the children, and with all the curses which are written in the law. Cursed be he by day, and cursed be he by night. Cursed be he in sleeping, and cursed be he in waking, cursed in going out, and cursed in coming in. The Lord shall not pardon him, the wrath and fury of the Lord shall henceforth be kindled against this man, and shall lay upon him all the curses which are written in the book of the Law. The Lord shall destroy his name under the sun, and cut him off for his undoing from all the tribes of Israel, with all the curses of the firmament

* Lewes: "Biog. Hist. of Philosophy."

which are written in the book of the Law. But ye that cleave unto the Lord your God, live all of you this day. And we warn you that none may speak with him by word of mouth nor by writing, nor show any favor to him, nor be under one roof with him, nor come within four cubits of him, nor read any paper composed or written by him." *

As the blasting words were uttered, the lights were all suddenly immersed in the blood, a cry of religious horror and execration burst from all; and in that solemn darkness, and to those solemn curses, they shouted Amen, Amen! Thus the blinded race cast forth the noblest man of his generation, as it had done in ages before—a man whom, as in the preceding time, the Gentile world was to adopt and love, to set upon a pinnacle indeed as a guide and benefactor.

There is a singular elevation about the life of Spinoza henceforth. His legal right to inherit a portion of his father's estate was denied. He established it, but handed the share over to his sisters, who had disputed his claim, magnanimously overlooking their enmity. The handsome fortune which a friend desired to leave him he refused to receive; he declined an ample pension from Louis XIV.; he refused a position at the University of Heidelberg, as compromising his independence. By polishing his crystals he was able to keep soul and body together, while he devoted his main strength to speculations as profound as have ever occupied the brain of man. He was serenely brave. The great Condé having

* Pollock: "Life of Spinoza."

invaded Holland with a French army, sent for Spinoza, whose reputation had interested him, to visit him in his camp. The mob, hearing of the intercourse, suspected the philosopher of being a spy, and were about to tear him in pieces. He showed himself ready to face their rage with a heart undaunted. His character was made up of generous simplicity and heroic forbearance. He taught the learned world the doctrines he had elaborated with endless toil ; but he taught children to be regular in their attendance on divine service. He had no unwise proselytism which would destroy old convictions in minds unfitted to receive others. One day his hostess, a simple unlettered Christian, asked him if he believed she could be saved by her religion. He answered : " Your religion is a good one, you ought not to seek another, nor doubt that yours will procure your salvation, provided you add to your piety the tranquil virtues of domestic life." *

He died when but forty-five, the peer of the sublimest leaders of the human race. It would be out of place here to attempt to outline the vast system which forms his title to immortal fame. He was persecuted in life and in death. The charge of atheism, with which his fame has long been burdened, he regarded as the grossest and most wicked of calumnies, and great champions at last arose to vindicate his memory. It was, indeed, his teaching that there was but one infinite substance, and that is God. Whatever is, is in God ; and without Him nothing can be conceived. He is the universal being,

* Colerus.

of which all things are the manifestations. He is the sole substance; every thing else is a mode; yet without substance, mode cannot exist. God, viewed under the attributes of infinite substance, is the *natura naturans*, that which forever creates; God, viewed as a manifestation, as the modes under which his attributes appear, is the *natura naturata*, that which is created. He is the cause of all things, and that immanently, not transiently. This, according to G. H. Lewes, is the heart and pith of the system of Spinoza,—certainly not atheism,—certainly not materialism, for though God is called substance (*substantans*), it is only in a high spiritual sense which the thinker is careful to make clear. If the scheme deserves to be called pantheism, the destroying of the creation while God is made all in all, a few citations will show that the entertaining of these ideas was not inconsistent in Spinoza, with an active and beautiful spirit of humanity.

“He who lives according to reason endeavors to the utmost of his power to outweigh another man’s hate, anger, or despite against him with love or highmindedness. * * * He who chooses to avenge wrong by requiting it with hatred is assuredly miserable. But he who strives to cast out hatred by love, may fight his fight in joy and confidence. As for those he doth conquer, they yield to him joyfully, and that not because their strength faileth, but because it is increased.

“A man who desires to help others by counsel or deeds, so that they may together enjoy the chief good, will be very forward to win their love to him,

but not to draw them into admiration of him. In common talk he will eschew telling of men's faults, and will speak but sparingly of human weakness. But he will speak at large of man's virtue and power, and the means of perfecting the same, that thus men may endeavor, not from fear and disgust, but wholly in joyfulness, to live, so far as in them lies, after the commandment of reason." *

The biographer of Spinoza calls this "a lofty refinement of the fundamental duty of good-will to men, which is not to be found, so far as I know, in any other moralist." The tone of the passage is declared to be like that of Marcus Aurelius, but there is no exact parallel.

Very lofty too is the teaching of this pure sage as regards the motive which should influence man in the pursuit of virtue. Good must be done not through any hope of reward or fear of punishment, for the reward of virtue is virtue itself. As we should expect, Spinoza was a firm and consistent supporter of political liberty, disposed to go much farther in allowing individual thought, habits, and enterprise to have free scope, than the statesmen of his time. Rising above the Jewish prejudices in which he had been nurtured, he regarded Jesus as a man indeed, but a man of unique and transcendent moral genius, above Moses and the prophets. With broad-minded tolerance he declares: "For Turks and heathen, if they worship God by justice and charity to their neighbors, I believe they have the spirit of Christ and are saved."

* Pollock.

If we trace for a moment the history of Spinoza's fame we find him at first hated and denounced, but never forgotten. The unlearned held him in holy horror, and the learned refused to do him justice. Leibnitz, his contemporary, and at one time his correspondent, depreciated him; Locke speaks of him as "justly decried"; and Bishop Berkeley refers to his "wild imaginations." It was the great Lessing, in the middle of the eighteenth century, who first elevated Spinoza to a lofty position; he declared that there was no philosophy but his. Goethe accepted with no less enthusiasm the outcast Jew, being drawn especially by his boundless unselfishness. He finds the saying marvellous: "Whoso truly loves God must not expect that God will love him in return." In our own century he has held the hearts of the most gifted of the world. It was Novalis who called him the God-intoxicated man. Heine and Fichte were penetrated by his influence. Hegel declared that "to be a philosopher one must first be a Spinozist." Auerbach, who translated him, believed that "Spinoza's mind had fed the thought of two centuries." Coleridge brought it to pass that he received at last a fair appreciation from English thinkers, and in connection with this introduction an amusing story is told by Coleridge himself.

It was the troublous time of the French Revolution, and as the young Englishman returned from the Continent, and with little reticence proceeded to pour out wild ideas into the ear of his friend Wordsworth, who was also known to entertain extravagant

opinions, a worthy magistrate of Somersetshire, felt it to be his duty as an Englishman to cause these mad-brained men to be watched. A spy was set upon them, who, after a careful investigation, reported Coleridge and Wordsworth as after all loyal men. "He had repeatedly hid himself for hours together behind a bank at the seaside (our favorite seat), and overheard our conversation. At first he fancied that we were aware of our danger, for he often heard me talk of our 'Spy Nozy' which he was inclined to interpret of himself, and of a remarkable feature belonging to him, but he was speedily convinced it was the name of a man who had made a book, and lived long ago."

The best England of Coleridge's day was as densely ignorant of the high-souled philosopher, as was the worthy spy. But appreciation came. Shelley drew from him inspiration; Maurice, Froude, and Matthew Arnold, in our time, have done him justice. Not less so Taine and Renan in France. At the present time there is no more honored name among all the heroes of abstract thought. Says the pious Schleiermacher: "Sacrifice with me to the manes of the holy but repudiated Spinoza. The great spirit of the world penetrated him; the Infinite was his beginning and his end; the universe his only and eternal love. He was filled with religion and religious feeling, and therefore it is that he stands alone, unapproachable—the master in his art, but elevated above the profane world, without adherents, and without even citizenship." Says G. H. Lewes: "He was a brave and simple man, earn-

estly meditating on the deepest subjects that can occupy the human race. He produced a system which will ever remain as one of the most astounding efforts of abstract speculation—a system that has been decried for nearly two centuries as the most iniquitous and blasphemous of human invention; and which has now, within the last sixty years, become the acknowledged parent of a whole nation's philosophy, ranking among its admirers some of the most pious and illustrious intellects of the age."

